

Fantasy Gamer



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THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY GAMING
FEB/MAR 1984 NUMBER 4

Dragonriders of Pern Featured Review

THE SOLIMAR QUEST
Generic Fantasy Adventure

VAMPIRE TRAP
Fiction by Timothy Zahn
plus TFT Gaming Notes by Steve Jackson

Solo Undead

Featured Reviews:
Harn
Christians and Lions

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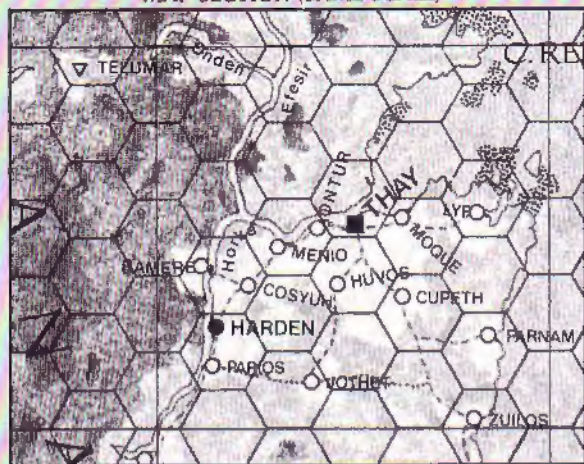
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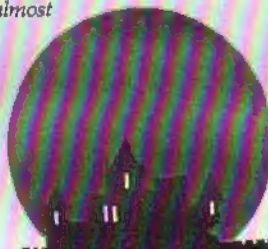


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*Hobbits, get out of town by sundown.

a shock, after the lavish cover and map. They feature plain orange covers, and the material inside is printed in rather small type, in brown ink on brown paper. It's not easy to read, and numerous typographical errors added to my bad first impression. But regardless of the look — no doubt easy on Columbia's budget, but hard on the eyes — the "Harnview" and "Harndex" are worth reading.

●●●●● Harnview ●●●●●

The "Harnview" should be read first; it is the general introduction to Harn. It comprises the following sections:

Introduction: the obligatory discussion of fantasy gaming in general, with suggestions to the gamemaster. It points out that Harn is rich in neither money nor magic, and not the place for mega-characters.

Cultures: a short discussion of the various kingdoms and tribes of Harn. The "Harndex" greatly expands on all this information.

Religions: one page of confusing and unnecessary theological background, and one page explaining ten major gods, with their temples, orders, attributes, and hierarchies. A great debt, in both style and substance, is owed here to Professor M.A.R. Barker's *Empire of the Petal Throne*. However, just as in *EPT*, the dark maneuverings of rival temples provide ample opportunity for adventure and intrigue.



"The Rape of Thay" from Harndex

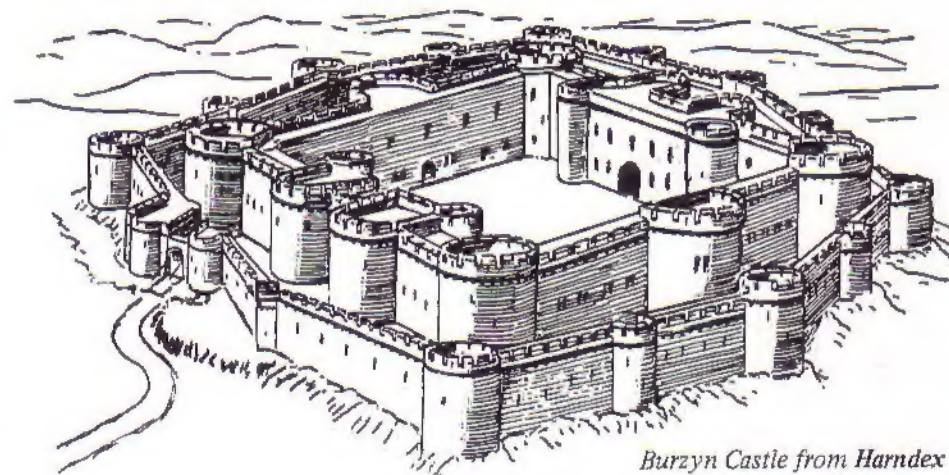
Economics: a map showing what goods are produced in what parts of Harn, and a discussion of the guild system, general economics, prices, and incomes. Definitely useful for the referee who likes to build adventures around concerns more mundane than magic swords or captive princesses — though *Harn* also offers those, if that's your taste.

History: no less than nine pages, spanning 20,000 years, the last 600 or so in detail. Who succeeded whom, who killed whom, and who died in bed, for dozens of petty tribes and empires. There is more here than you will ever want to know about a *real* place, let alone a fantasy world. I suspect that very few gamers will share Crossby's obvious preoccupation

with the history of his world, but this material is at least consistent and reasonably believable, and (at the expense of several lost pages) provides a feeling of depth.

The Regional Map: an explanation of the full-color map.

Character Generation: three pages of tables to provide race, nationality, birth-



Burzyn Castle from Harndex

place, social status, occupation, etc., for characters born in Harn. It should be noted that *Harn* is not a complete role-playing system; this table does not give you a "complete" character with attributes, abilities, and a personality. It *does* allow you to "Harn-ify" a character from any other system. For instance, if you want to use *Harn* in a *TFT* campaign, you

Scenarios: a single page of short scenario suggestions. This will be satisfactory for the experienced referee. The play group that is still at the "complete module" stage will not be able to work from this.

Encounters: two pages of standard tables.

Weather Generation: for those who determine weather by rolling dice, here's a page of tables to let you determine cloud cover, temperature, precipitation and wind. The system at least prevents silly combinations.

Movement: a page of material that should have gone under "Time & Motion," and is equally useful.

Thus ends "Harnview." Some parts are better than others, but most of it is at least interesting, and very little is downright worthless — a far better average than most prepackaged material achieves.

●●●●● Harndex ●●●●●

The name is revoltingly cute, and set off a spate of Harnpuns. We had a *harn* day's night, committing many disharntening linguistic atrocities. We culminated with the conclusion that if the authors of this supplement advertised it widely, that would be tooting their own *harn* (ugh!). But *harn*estly, folks, this is a *harn*dy guide to everything you wanted to know, and dozens of things you didn't, about the *harn*ted woods and *harn*dy warriors of Harn.

What we have here is an A-to-Z listing of all things Harnish, enlivened with maps and sketches. Each god has a detailed listing, as does each kingdom and each race of beings. The listing for the Gargun (orcs) is especially interesting. Harn's elves and dwarves are essentially pure Tolkien, but

would use *TFT* to determine strength, dexterity, and intelligence; then you would use *Harn* to find details of your character's background; finally, you would go back to *TFT* and choose skills and abilities consistent with your basic *TFT* attributes and your Harnish background. *Harn* makes the not-unreasonable assumption that most players will be able to accomplish this to their own satisfaction.

Pregame: a half-page telling you how to set up a game, and a page and a half of advertising for Columbia's own brand of hex paper. The sample page of hexes looks adequate, but has been overprinted "SAMPLE" in huge letters, just to make sure nobody copies it . . . a rather tacky touch.

the orcs are different — socially and biologically — and show inventive ability on the author's part.

Much of the "Harndex" — certainly more than half the listings, though not half the total text — is made up of one- or two-line mentions of mountain peaks, rivers, long-dead chiefs and kings, and the like. Even some of the longer listings are limited in value — who really cares about the Embalmer's Guild, anyway? And a great deal of Harn's complex history, given at length in the "Harnview," is repeated and embellished. One might question whether the "flavor" this material adds is worth the space it takes up. For some players, it will be. For others, it won't.

But in sum, the Harndex is a good idea, well executed. The poor indexing of role-playing game instructions is a perpetual problem. By devoting a whole *book* to the index, Columbia has attacked the problem in a novel way, and I think a successful one.

◆◆◆◆◆ Quibbles ◆◆◆◆◆

Though I feel Harn is a good package, it is not without faults. The first is, of course, production. Surely, for 20 dollars, we could have been given type that was easier to read, and art on the book covers. And if the system was truly rewritten nine times from beginning to end, as the introduction states, it might also have been proofread one more time before it

went to the printers. No page, it seems, is without typos, detracting from the impact of a book that was clearly intended to be a professional effort. A package with a price this high should be more carefully produced.

Also, in a supplement that is designed to be generic and flexible, too much space is given to unnecessary instructions to the referee. If a referee is ready for *Harn*, he does not need to be told how to run a campaign or how to deal with players. If a game system is worthwhile at all, it has its own rules for movement and time-scales; those that *Harn* provides are neither necessary nor especially good. The space could better have been devoted to social or cultural information, scenarios, creature descriptions, or even art.

And some parents will not want their younger children using Harn at all. To role-play a participant in Harn's Pamesani Games, or a cleric of the Order of the Eight Demons, would require not just an adult attitude, but a rather perverse one. "No, Billy, it's *my* turn to mutilate the captives!" This material is only a tiny fraction of the whole, but it will bother some parents, and no doubt cause the Moral Majority to foam righteously. It was unnecessary.

◆◆ More to Come ◆◆

Columbia Games is new to the world of fantasy gaming; located in the state of

Washington, it is also somewhat out of the mainstream. But, for all that, they have produced an excellent first product. They also produce hex paper in four types; a 16" x 11" package of 10 sheets, or an 8" x 11" package of 20 sheets, sells for \$3.00 postpaid. I have not seen a sample, and have no reason to believe it to be any better or any worse than other types of hex paper. Expansion modules for Harn and surrounding territories are just now available and I look forward to them with great interest.

Who should buy *Harn*? Certainly not the novice gamer; this is advanced material, requiring expertise with some chosen system. *Harn* is for the experienced referee or gaming group that is ready to start a new campaign. It is not "source material" that can easily be taken apart and worked into an existing adventure. To enjoy Harn, you will have to send your characters there, or start a whole new campaign with Harnian folk. If that idea appeals to you, you will probably get many hours of play from *Harn*.

HARN (Columbia Games, Box 8006, Blaine, WA 98230; in Canada, Box 581, 810 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4C9); \$20.00. Designed by N. Robin Crosby. Generic supplement for any FRP system. 8½" x 11" folder, one 32-page booklet, one 64-page booklet, one 22" x 34" full-color map. Published 1983. **FB**

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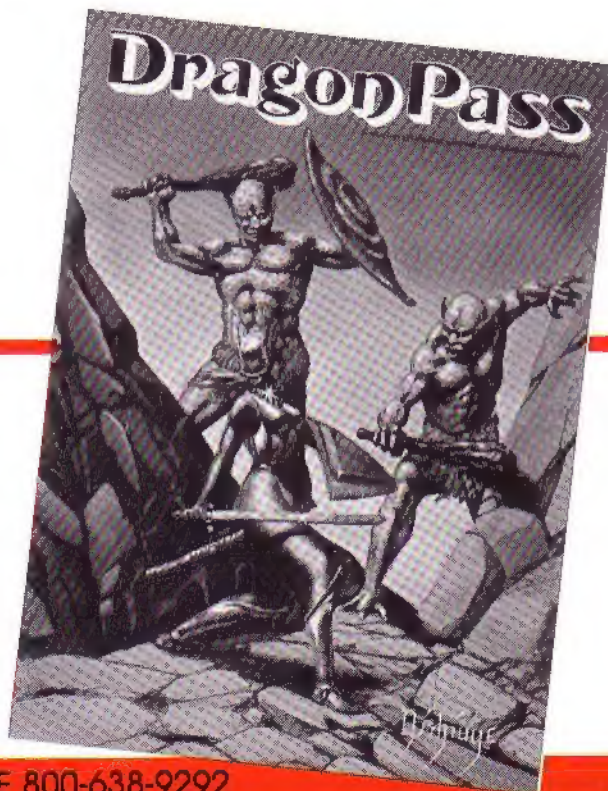
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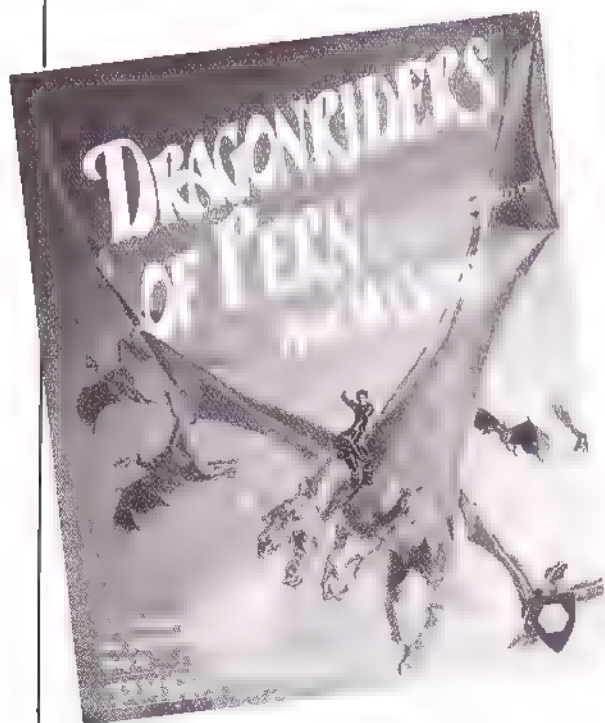
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Featured Review



Mayfair Games' *Dragonriders of Pern*

by Aaron Allston

Let me preface this review by stating that Anne McCaffrey's *Dragonriders* books constitute my all-time favorite fiction series. When I heard the first rumors that Mayfair Games was doing a *Dragonriders* game, I was interested. I hoped it would be a boardgame instead of a role-playing system. (RPGs are my preference, but honestly — the usual *Dragonriders* novel consists of a reluctant romance, a great discovery, lots of Thread-fighting, and F'lar stabbing someone with a belt knife. That just wouldn't transfer terribly well to an RPG.)

As anyone who's read one of the books knows, the *Dragonriders* novels (and the associated series, the Harper Hall books) concern themselves with the planet Pern, a world colonized by Terrans long ago in the forgotten past. So long ago that the Pernese have all but forgotten their extra-terrestrial origins. Pern is cyclically threatened by space-travelling spores which emigrate from one of the other planets in Pern's solar system; the spores, entering Pern's atmosphere, turn into threadlike acidic tendrils which scorch flesh and burrow into earth, destroying plant life in huge areas. The ingenious Pernese have learned to combat this invader by breeding an indigenous reptile into a fire-

breathing, teleporting dragon, which they fly against Threadfall. In between Threadfalls, the dragonrider leaders plot to wrest power from one another, either for personal satisfaction or to unite and better the world. It's obviously a complicated situation, quite a task to develop into a boardgame.

And Mayfair has, in a fashion, succeeded — at least in that people playing this game will feel themselves to be playing a *Pern* game instead of a game about *Deathworld* or *Ringworld* or *Oz*. In essence, *Dragonriders of Pern* is a beer and pretzels minigame in \$12.95, boxed, format. It does simulate events on Pern, and we have to remember that it's not especially aimed at the adventure-gamer market. Aimed as it is at the more general bookstore and family-game market, it has a new set of disadvantages and advantages.

Let's look at the entire package:

Components

Dragonriders of Pern consists of:

Thirty-eight Personality cards, each one depicting a Weyrleader, Weyrwoman, Lord Holder, or Craftmaster of Pern;

Fifty Event cards, which (when drawn) indicate that an event has taken place — say, the discovery of a fire-lizard egg nest ("clutch" to the Pernese);

Twenty-four Threadfall cards, which show the regions of Pern where Thread will be falling this game-turn;

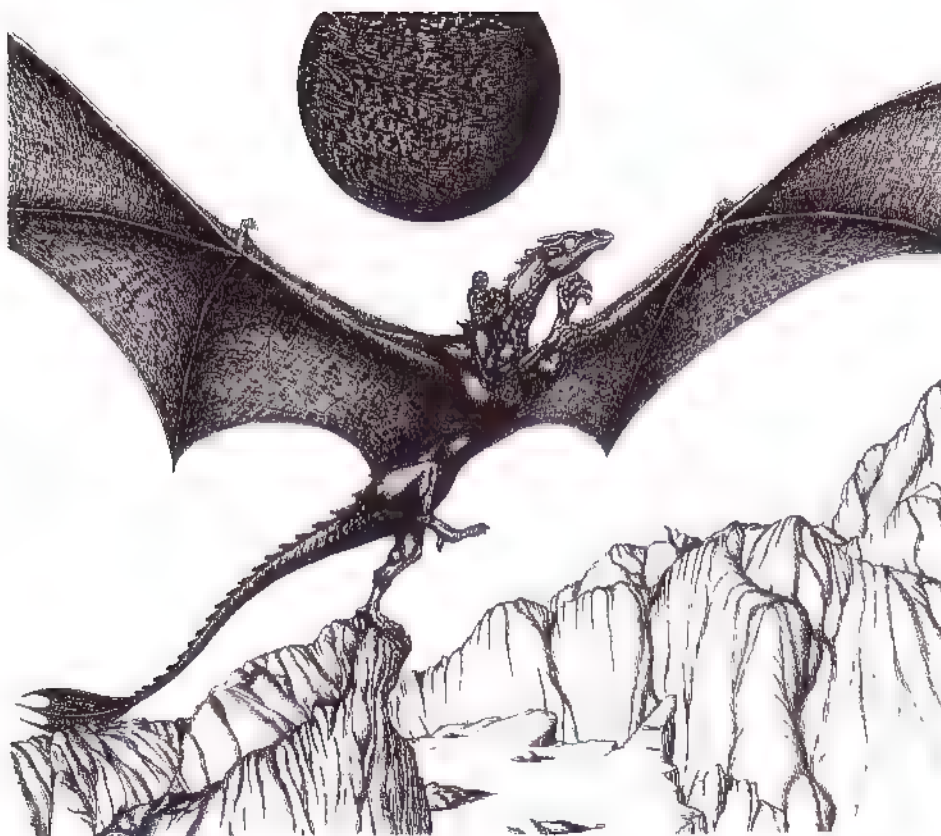
108 die-cut markers used to indicate the strengths of dragon forces, the positions of Weyrleaders and other notables, Threadfall in both its falling and burrowing stages, and the monetary units;

A 19" x 24" mounted mapboard, in typical six-piece Mayfair jigsaw-puzzle style, painted by Tim Hildebrandt; Three dice;

Rulebooks, both 8½" x 11", one four-page and one 24-page;

And the box.

Personality cards, naturally enough, have art bearing likenesses of all the major characters in the game. While Anne McCaffrey, according to Mayfair Games president Darwin Bromley, is pleased with the renditions, I'm not sure others will be — any long-time reader of the novels will have visualized all of the characters and may disagree with some of these portrayals. But that's my personal



bias speaking — illustrated cards were inevitable in a game of this type, and niggling disagreements over the renditions do not affect game-play.

The Event cards, most of which were taken straight from the novels, do a lot to establish the Pernese flavor to the game. I question the inclusion of *two* cards in which irritable dragonriders demand a craftsman's goods and start a fight — I don't remember more than one important event of the sort in the novels. At least the card's net *game* effect (lost income) is not as far-reaching as the *book* event which inspired it (F'lar stabbed, sent off to Southern Weyr to heal, and breaking the ground for the reluctant romance of *Dragonquest*).

More significant is the difficulty posed by the Duel card. As we know, F'lar is attacked once in each novel by a Holder or Weyrleader and has to best him in a knife duel. In the game, only one player per game — the one who draws the lone Duel card — has the option of initiating a duel. The effects of a successful duel are very nice, but the player who plays the card and initiates the duel has only a 28% chance of winning it. In short, the way the rules are constructed, if you're stupid enough to initiate a duel, you're probably going to have the stuffing kicked out of you.

A big deal is made of the fact that the map graphics were done by Tim Hildebrandt. Big deal, I'm afraid, is also the appropriate response. The map is serviceable and not especially colorful. At least all the Weyrs and Holds are where they should be. Clearly, Mayfair paid for name-recognition here. I'd have preferred a first-

rate map by an up-and-coming unknown to a second-rate map by practically anyone. (To be honest, though, the map *construction* is nice; as funny-looking as the jigsaw map-pieces appear at first, they hold together, lie flat, and endure.) Even more annoying to me is the fact that Hildebrandt's name is displayed in misleading prominence on the game cover — until you read every word of text on the box-top, it appears that either Hildebrandt or Anne McCaffrey designed the game. The real designer, Sam Lewis, receives no cover credit. Come on, Mayfair, if you're trying for big-league name recognition, play by big-league rules. Authors get cover bylines; designers should, too.

Last, I'm not sure why the rules are presented in two booklets. The basic rules appear in the four-pager. Advanced and solo rules, an introduction to the series (by McCaffrey), a Pernese dictionary and an article on Threadfighting (by her son Todd Johnson), designer's notes, and pull-out charts appear in the 24-pager. Perhaps the desired effect was that a non-gamer looking at the package would not be put off by four pages of rules, while a larger rulebook might scare non-gamers off. Strangely, there are enough white pages and repeated charts in the larger booklet that the basic rules could have squeezed in with no problem. Since two booklets cost more than one, we're being done no service here.

In general, though, the components are nice; they're more than competitive with most adventure games, and certainly won't look bad next to most family games. Let's give the game good marks for component quality.

Playing the Game

The turn sequence of *Dragonriders of Pern* goes something like this:

The Weyrleaders go to unallied Holds and try to ally the Lord Holders there — essentially by throwing down money (bidding) and rolling dice against the bid to check for success (something like *Illuminati*, except that a CRT is used and there's much less leeway in the use of money). A card is drawn to determine randomly where Thread will appear this turn. The Weyrleaders protecting the afflicted areas apportion their dragonstrength across the areas under fire. If a Weyr is under-strength, or the Weyrleader is currying favor (or just very cautious), he may invite other Weyrs to help him in his defense. "Combat" with the Thread is resolved, generally resulting in Thread destroyed and some dragon-forces temporarily reduced. If the Thread in an area is not destroyed in one turn, it infests the area and spreads to surrounding areas at the beginning of the next turn, where it must be fought again. That's a real cause of ulcers in the game, as it is in the books. After all the fighting's done, successful Weyrs who participated in the fight receive money (marks); the unsuccessful or those who've acted nastily (by spurning requests for their assistance, for example) lose marks; and Weyrleaders who have money and injured dragons can start to recover lost dragonstrength. It's a fair turn sequence, and it simulates the flow of Threadfall reasonably well.

I have only one problem with the *Dragonriders of Pern* turn sequence, but it's a real problem. In the novels — from late in the first book to partway into the second, a span of seven years — the dragonriders, using F'lar's timing charts, knew when and where Thread would be falling at any given time. As the *game* is structured, in a given turn a Weyrleader can either attempt to ally a Holder or participate in a Threadfall, and he won't know if he's to fight Thread this turn until *after* the Alliance phase. In short, he doesn't know when Thread is falling in his territory. This adds a certain amount of tension to the situation, which is good for the *game* — quite good, in fact — but not so good for the *simulation*.

My recommendation is this: Remove the *Threadfall is Unpredictable* card from the Event deck prior to shuffling. After shuffling, insert it — *in clear view of everybody* — smack in the middle of the Event deck. Until that card is pulled, the turn's Threadfall card is pulled and displayed at the *beginning of the Alliance phase*, so that the Weyrleaders who are going to be afflicted this turn know about it and can prepare ahead. When the *Threadfall is Unpredictable* card is pulled, it is played immediately, and for the rest of the game the turn sequence is precisely as described in the rules. Thus, we have a shift (as in

Dragonquest) when Threadfall suddenly becomes erratic and unpredictable, and stays that way.

In the Basic game, *Dragonriders of Pern* ends when all Lord Holders are allied; the player who has allied the most Lord Holders is the victor. In the Advanced game, the winner is the one who's allied the most Lord Holders and Craftmasters, unless the Masterharper is played and engineered the winner, in which case he's really the winner (sneaky fellow as usual). In either game, everyone loses if a turn ends with ten Thread Burrows on the map — we can consider the northern continent lost to Thread.

The solo game is a simulation of the first novel, *Dragonflight*. As Benden Weyrleader, you have to protect all Pern from Thread until the Ruatha Hold Tapestry card comes up — in other words, until Lessa teleports back four hundred years to get the Oldtimers. Strategy is secondary to luck, as a particularly nasty Threadfall — and some of those cards are vicious — can lose the game for you right off the bat. It's a pleasant diversion, however. You win if you last until the Tapestry card, and (as usual) lose if the continent is overrun with Thread. That's pretty logical.

There are no real problems with the way *Dragonriders of Pern* flows. As I've mentioned, it's basically a minigame, and a simple one, so there aren't too many

places for real design problems — or dazzling bits of simulation game design either. Die-rolling and card-pulling luck play too big a part to satisfy the adventure gamer, although it's fine if bought as a family game. I'm not satisfied with the way the rules were written — little ambiguities here and there indicate that the Mayfair folks didn't playtest the game as thoroughly as they might have, but a little coherent thought on the part of the players is all it takes to resolve any problems.

Final Notes

So, who's the game for, and who will it please?

"I think they've done a superb job. The artwork is excellent." That's one, important, opinion: That was Anne McCaffrey's statement at Context in Houston last November. According to her son, Todd Johnson, who wrote a couple of background pieces for the game and made sure it stayed consistent with the books, "It's a good game from the books, as well as a good game. Sam Lewis has done a good job." Considering natural fears on the part of science fiction and fantasy writers (whose works are being adapted into games more and more frequently) Anne McCaffrey's satisfaction with this product is a good sign.

I think, too, that anyone buying *Drag-*

onriders of Pern as a family or beer and pretzels game will be satisfied, though probably not particularly impressed, with it.

As it stands, the game will probably not attract the adventure gamer. It's certainly adequate for a family game, but the people who buy Parker Brothers and Milton Bradley products will likely never have heard of Anne McCaffrey. What we have left, then, is a family game with name-recognition only among science fiction readers — a rather peculiar combination. I'll be interested to see how well it does on that basis.

In the final analysis, I'd recommend *Dragonriders of Pern* first, foremost, and only to die-hard fans of the series and to McCaffrey completists. The game mechanics are too simple, luck-oriented, and occasionally arbitrary (witness the Duel rules) to be of much interest to adventure gamers not fascinated by the novels. This is not to speak ill of the game; I'll wish it a long and merry life in its chosen market, and keep a copy beside my weathered McCaffrey novels.

DRAGONRIDERS OF PERN (Mayfair Games); \$12.95. Designed by Sam Lewis. 112 playing cards, 108 circular cardstock markers, 19" x 24" mounted jigsaw-format map, two 8½" x 11" rule booklets, three dice, boxed. One to seven players. Published 1983. **FG**

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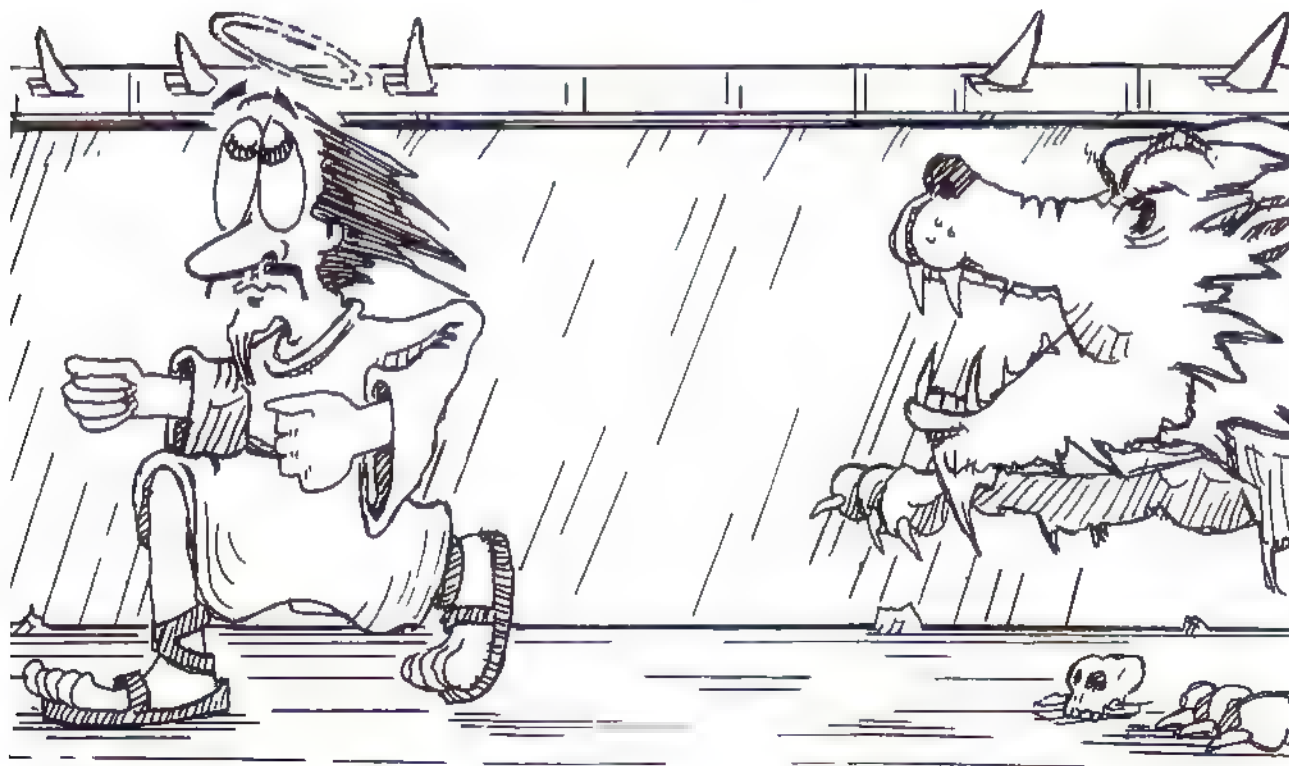
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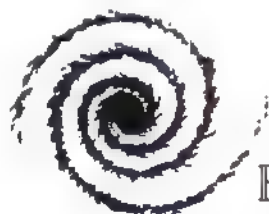
The proclamation passed by a margin of 599 to 0, with one abstention. In a related story, Sen. M. Antonius Antonius declined to comment on his impending banishment.

The vote crossed all party lines and reflected the Senate's endorsement of the Emperor's program providing low cost* entertainment.

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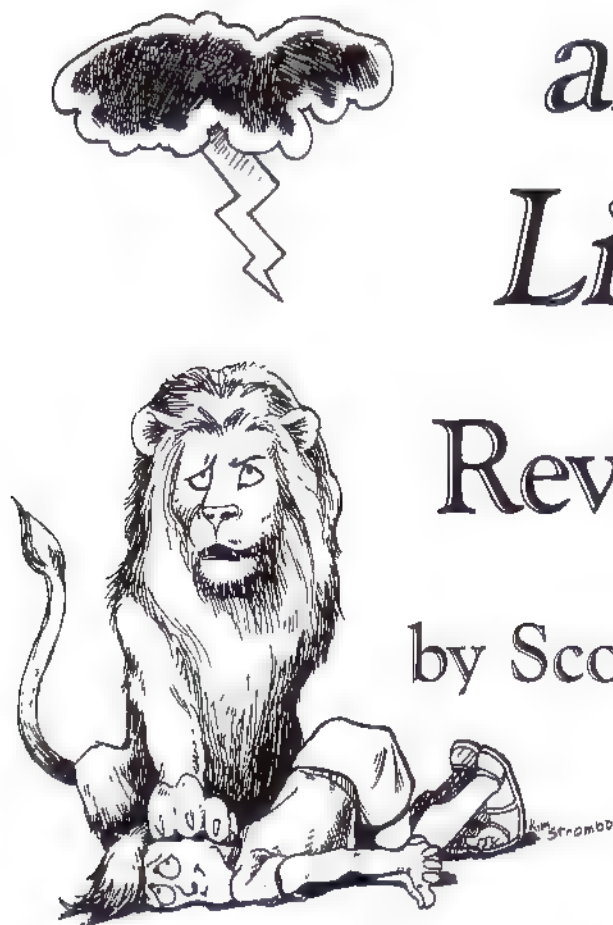


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Pray or Die

Christians and Lions



Reviewed
by Scott Haring

Let's face it. If you're seriously concerned that *Nuclear War* trivializes one of the most important issues of our time, and if you sometimes wonder if fantasy role-playing games are warping the youth of America, then *Christians and Lions* may not be the game for you.

Despite the warning on the cover (it says, "The Irreverent Strategy Game," right there in big print), you may not be prepared for what's inside. Therein lies C&L's first hurdle — can anyone take seriously a game in which dozens of perfectly blameless innocents are ripped to shreds by marauding beasts?

While the cynics among us may ask, "What's next — historical simulation of Nazi death camps?" those who can suspend judgment long enough to look at the game itself will be pleasantly surprised. The rulebook is a delight to read,

written with wry wit and a fiendish sense of humor. Designers Douglas J. Woods and Steve Davidson, tongues planted firmly in cheek, have backed up a wickedly warped idea with a set of rules that fulfills its demented promise.

The game is played on a simple rectangular arena marked in hexes. There are one or two lions and a whole bunch of Christians. Lions have three characteristics — Hunger, Aggression and Agility. Each of these is rated on a scale of 1 to 6, and can either be randomly rolled or assigned. To give the lions some more personality, each number for each characteristic has its own name. Hence, a lion may be described as "nauseous, shy and lively," or — bad news for the Christians — "starving, berserk and nimble." Admittedly, it doesn't have much to do with the game, but it is funny. This can be said

of a number of things in the rulebook. Anyway, Hunger and Aggression are added together to yield a Strength rating. Aggression and Agility are added together to yield a Speed rating.

The Christians have a number of different units, ranging from prophets and disciples to slaves and children. Each counter has two factors printed on it: a Speed rating and a Holiness factor. Speed ratings are pretty obvious. Each unit can move up to its Speed rating in hexes (it works that way for the lions, too). The real craziness begins with the Holiness factor. If you thought this game was irreverent already, well...

Cowering in the arena, facing certain death, the Christians have only one logical alternative — prayer. Any Christian under direct attack — and any other Christian in the same or an adjacent hex — may pray. Three six-sided dice are rolled and a table is consulted. Depending on the holiness factor (a number from 1 to 20), the praying player can receive *Luck*, *Diversion*, *Intercession*, or the disappointing *No Answer*.

Luck is the weakest response. After another die roll, the lion either attacks as usual, attacks at a minus, or doesn't attack at all. Diversion moves the lion one hex in a random direction; if the lion can't reach the Christians he declared attacks against, he loses those attacks.

But the real sweepstakes prizes (and the biggest laughs) come on the Intercession table. There are 11 possible results on the 2d6 table, and they range from Thunder Bolt (lion either stunned or zorched to ashes outright) to Nobody Home (lion suffers severe identity crisis and lies down for two turns, trying to determine the meaning of life). "It is suggested that the lion player identify fully with the lion's problem," the rulebook advises. "It might do him some good."

The lion gets three attacks per turn; a swipe, a claw and a bite. The swipe is taken at the end of the lion's movement against any one Christian the lion passed during movement; the other two attacks are taken at the end of movement against Christians in the same hex (for one bite) or one hex away (for the claw). Christians get to pray after the lion moves, but before he attacks (except for the swipe, which is taken during movement). All this is very important in figuring the best strategy.

What? Strategy? Yes, Virginia, this game is not only borderline tacky and a barrel of laughs, it's also a fairly good strategy game.

The scenarios provided last a set number of turns, but the lion player only gets victory points for the number of casualties inflicted in the first few turns. The Christian player gets victory points for anything still alive at the end of the game. So the lion player usually has to make hay while the kills count for points, and

then keep it up to avoid leaving too many survivors.

Strategy is fairly straightforward. The lion gets three attacks per turn, he better use all of them or he'll run out of time. And since there is no prayer defense against the swipe attack, the lion should save the swipe attack for the holiest Christians.

The Christian player has two options. One is to spread his potential victims out so that the lion can't get his three attacks per turn. Unfortunately, there's a bunch of Christians and not a whole bunch of arena. Throw in the rule that says Christians cannot enter a hex with an already-dead Christian (respect for the dead), and that doesn't leave much room to run. The other method is less safe, but a lot more fun — crowd as many Christians as close together as possible. Remember, not only do Christians under attack get to pray, but so do those adjacent to the action. Five or six prayers per turn against the lion could do some nasty things, although it's sort of like going for a critical hit. Having the lion explode in spontaneous combustion is a quick way to win, but if your prayers go unanswered, it's dinner time.

My main complaint is with the physical components. They're downright cheap. The map looks like it was photocopied on a plain sheet of yellow paper, the counters are flimsy cardboard, and the cover isn't even attached to the rulebook. Omicron Games is obviously a low-budget operation, but this is carrying it a bit far. If they ever reprint this game (and I hope it becomes popular enough to warrant it), let's pray they spend a little more for a higher-quality product.

There are more things I wanted to mention — the section on suggested prayers for the Christian player ("Help!" was my favorite) and the provision for women to throw themselves in front of a lion about to attack a child, thus saving the child and getting a bonus in holiness — but I had to stop somewhere.

If you can get past the original premise (and let's be honest, anyone who's gleefully dropped 20 megatons on a friend in *Nuclear War*, offed a roommate in *Killer*, or cheerfully tortured an orc in an FRPG, it's not that big a leap), you'll have a lot of fun with this game. It won't go down in history as one of the great tactical simulations of our time, but there is tactical skill involved, and actual play is a real hoot. Recommended for anyone with a taste for the bizarre.

CHRISTIANS AND LIONS (The Omicron Games Company, P.O. Box 428, Caldwell, NJ 07006); \$5.00. Designed by Steve Davidson and Douglas J. Woods. 28-page booklet, 8½" x 11" mapboard, 100 cardboard counters (uncut). One to three players; playing time approximately 30 minutes. Published 1982. **FS**

Blood and Circuses

Designers' Notes for Christians and Lions

by Douglass Woods and Steve Davidson

Staying alive is hard work, or so we'd been told. We had to find the truth of this. And after months of endless toil and dusty library corners, after going through ream upon ream of paper and countless moldy tomes (many over 800 pages in length), we found it: Staying alive is hard work, harder than we ever imagined. But how to let the world know what we had learned?

Survival, we reasoned, is dependent upon the ability to recognize fear, rather than aggression, and in ourselves more than in others. This startling revelation led the staff at Omicron Games to hysterics, but later to a cold assessment of a game rooted in fear. An historical game would be a nice break from designing utterly fantastic space games, we decided, so why not feed Christians to the lions? Indeed, why not? It probably wouldn't sell...

How could we know that we were about to strike a nerve, as it were, in the impacted wisdom tooth of Western culture?

Once we started showing the game around — it was too good to keep to ourselves — we found we had grasped the proverbial tiger, or in this case lion, by its many-storied tail. The reaction was always the same, first shock and disbelief, followed by unqualified approbation. People seemed to find the idea outrageously funny, and not the least bit immoral. At least we weren't listening if the question of morality was raised; obviously there was big money to be made in survival. *Christians and Lions* had arrived.

While we had determined from our research that it would be more historically accurate to give the Christians absolutely no chance in the arena, we decided that we would have a better lesson in staying alive (as well as a better game) if we provided them with some remedy for the fangs of their antagonists. At first the Omicron playtesters, who had been known to chant "Blood! Blood! Blood!" during the course of a game, were disappointed. But once we explained that our solution would involve gambling on God, they cheered up and entered into the holy spirit of the thing. The results have been hilarious, with lions fried by thunderbolts, swallowed up by the earth, or

stirred into a rutting frenzy at the command of the Divine Being. We'd never been much interested in historical accuracy anyway.

We were, however, concerned with not compromising the tragic absurdity of the Christians' plight. So much of the game's flavor would have been lost had we not, for example, allowed women to throw themselves between a child and a charging lion. We also rated the Christians' relative holiness according to sex, age, and profession — no longer just so much lion bait.

We filled the arena with prophets and slaves, shepherds, disciples . . . and, of course, *Felis leo*. Just as we now felt empathy for the victims, our lions gained personalities as well. Thanks to our novel lion characteristics table, we could create beasts with quirks ranging from timid and nauseous (still dangerous, but not inclined to do much), to starving and berserk (forget it, you're dead).

Despite such later additions, we were able to keep *C&L* direct and reasonably simple. Players new to the game, even those new to wargaming in general, had no trouble picking up on the rules. We settled on a small board and a relatively small number of counters to simplify things further — not that the theme ever called for a larger format. Still, as it became increasingly apparent that we would have to put *C&L* into mass-production (we could hardly meet the demands of our friends and associates), we were fortunate the game had taken the shape it did. It only remained to codify the rules, adjust the CRTs, and design the scenarios to shuffle the game into some semblance of order. It seemed too easy; the hard part, we feared, was yet to come.

It is surprising that *C&L* has engendered so little controversy — so far, exactly none. We feel no obligation to apologize for the game, but ask only that any judgment of it be made in the same spirit with which it was designed. (And, in all honesty, the less speculation in that direction, the better.) We are nevertheless gentlemen, and recognize that some may yet find our game vile and in extremely poor taste. Well, why not? We've all got to survive somehow. And the rest, as they say, is history. **FS**

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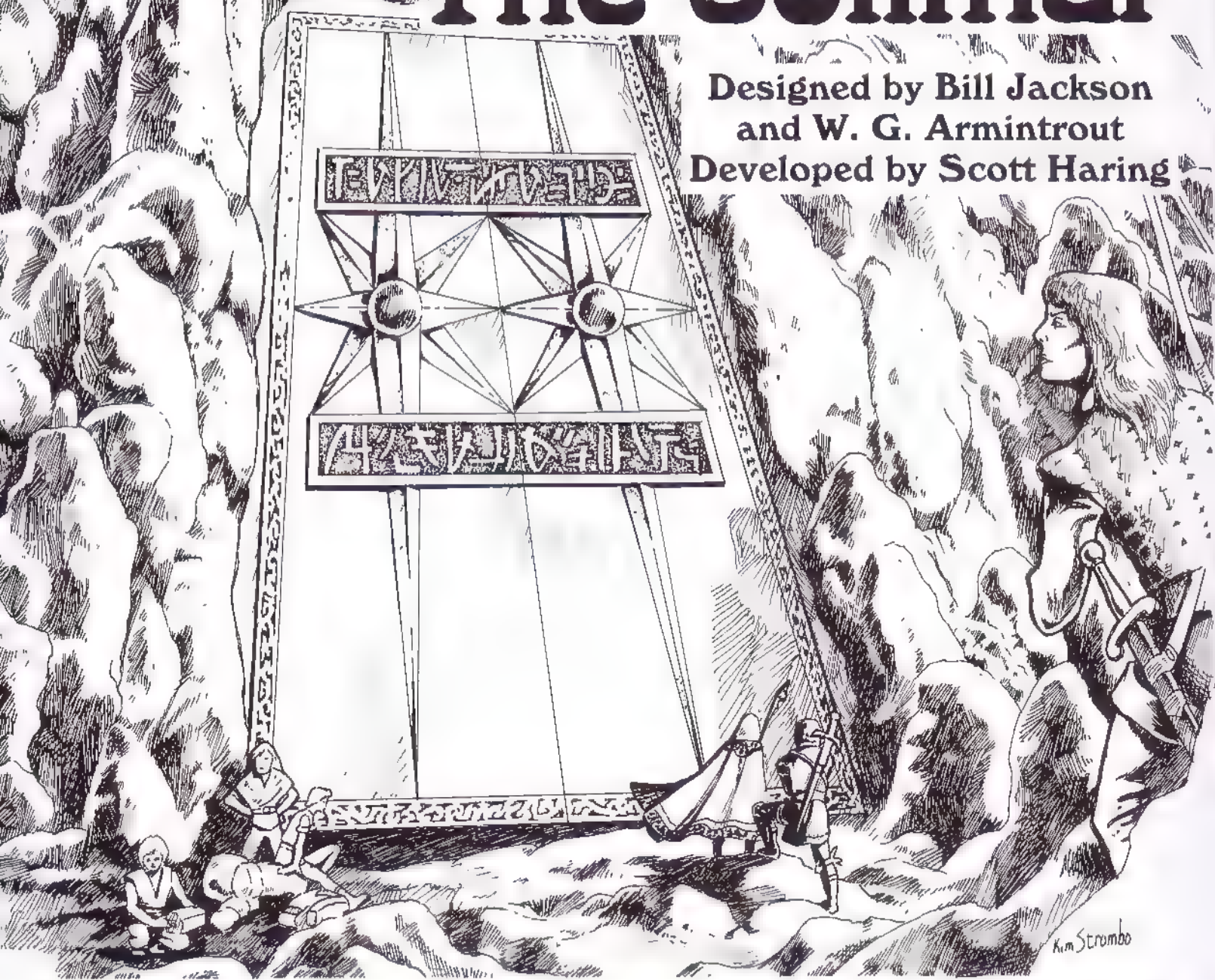
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The Solimar

Designed by Bill Jackson
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Developed by Scott Haring



Pre-Adventure Information

Alone in your bedchamber, you are awakened from peaceful slumber by a gathering light. Within the light is an ethereal lady of great beauty.

"Do not be alarmed," she says, "though I bring you bad tidings. Solimar, god of the sun, is dead."

You are sorrowed, for Solimar is your favorite of the gods. You have served him in your time.

"The god of the sun," she says, "was killed by four Great Viles, forged in the Abyss by four of the mightiest demons. The demons thought to use the Vile Creatures to steal the Godhead which held Solimar's powers, but their greed was their own undoing - they were destroyed by their own creations. The Viles then set out on their loathsome mission, to kill Solimar.

"They succeeded in the foul deed, though three of them were consumed in the wrath of the sun god.

"Fortunately, the wise and powerful Solimar had hidden his

Godhead in a place beyond the perception of the Viles. In the event of his passing, it was his desire that one among his worthy followers should find the Godhead and assume his powers.

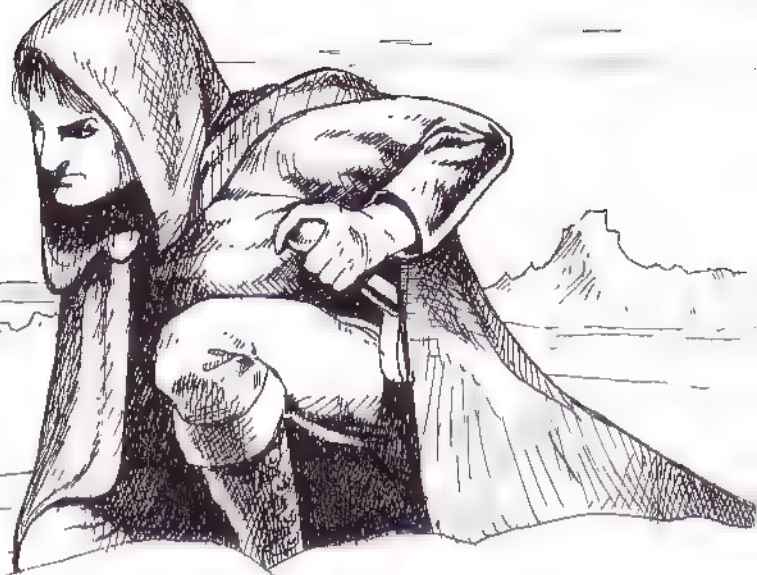
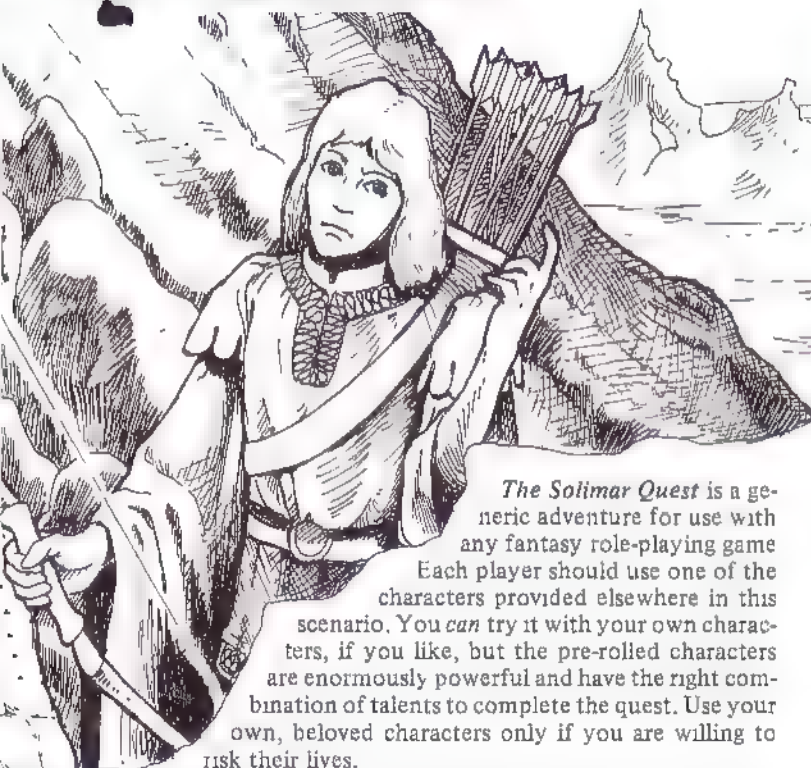
"You are one of the Worthy Ones who may seek the Godhead. But beware - the way is treacherous beyond the capabilities of any single mortal. Therefore it was the will of Solimar that a *team* of champions take on this task. And of these heroes, the greatest will find the Godhead and discover his or her destiny.

"Haste is of great importance. Beware the surviving Vile, for he continues to search for the glory that has escaped him. Should he capture the Godhead, he - and it - would pass into the Abyss and the favors of the sun would be lost forever.

"Among your companions are those who will gladly give their lives to save yours. You would do the same for them. But the way is hard, and the perils many. Some may turn from the quest. You must have wisdom as well as power, to tell the false from the true. Now," she says, "touch my staff."

You do so, and are whisked away on a gossamer wind . . .

Quest



The Solimar Quest is a generic adventure for use with any fantasy role-playing game.

Each player should use one of the characters provided elsewhere in this scenario. You can try it with your own characters, if you like, but the pre-rolled characters are enormously powerful and have the right combination of talents to complete the quest. Use your own, beloved characters only if you are willing to risk their lives.

In choosing from the list of pre-rolled characters, you should bear in mind the order in which they are listed. Each character has been given a number, from 1 to 12. This reflects the relative importance of each character (with "1" being the most important, and "12" the least). You don't have to have all 12 characters in play, however; survival and success depend on thought power, not on combat strength.

Once you have selected the character you wish to play, you will find that the Visitrix — who knows your very thoughts — has magically provided you with:

- *The equipment you desire* — Some especially powerful magical items are already listed on your character sheet. In addition to these, the Visitrix transported exactly what you thought you might need: pet animals, tropical clothing, rope, chalk, holy water, armor, weapons — whatever you desire (within reason).

However . . . the Visitrix did *not* transport any additional magical items, or such strange items as pet bears, warhorses, chests of treasure, henchmen of any kind (only the worthy were invited to participate), or laser carbines. You may, of course, argue with your gamemaster about this — the GM has the right to allow or disqualify anything on your equipment list.

- *Spells* — Special magical rules will be used on this adventure. All spells will be divided into three groups, depending on their strength. The three groups are Simple, Powerful, and Mighty. In *AD&D*, appropriate levels would be: Simple (levels 1-3), Powerful (levels 4-6), and Mighty (levels 7-9). For *TFT*, the breakdown would be by IQ rating: Simple (8-11), Powerful (12-16), and Mighty (17-20). *TFT* wizards do not use their own ST for spells in this adventure — they are assumed to carry ST batteries adequate for their spells. You may use each Simple spell three times. Powerful spells may be used twice. Mighty spells may each be used only *once*.

Also note that, for the most part, the magical walls and doors of Solimar's Mountain are too powerful to be tampered with by the player characters — after all, they were built by a god. Spells like "Find Traps," "Commune," and "Find the Path" in *AD&D* should have only a small chance to work, and the gamemaster should include a chance that false information would be given.

- *Name* — On your character sheet you are given the first letter

of your character's name. You can complete the rest of the name as you please. Of course, characters may be male or female.

STOP! If you are planning to play in this adventure, read no further. This is for gamemasters only.

The Poetry of Solimar

The set-up information on the pre-adventure sheet should tell the players (and you, the gamemaster) everything you need to know. It sets the stage. Except for one thing.

Just as you actually gather to play, you must give each player Solimar's Poem. Do this either by note or by taking each aside, and privately say something like.

"As you feel yourself materializing after your mysterious voyage on the wind, you hear the lovely voice of the Visitrix once again

"She whispers — 'You may know your true companions by this verse given to you by Solimar . . .'"

The gamemaster must now give the player the verse below:

Nigh to the brink	Time cycles on
Below by the drink	Until it is gone
Beneath at the end	Right of the sun
About round the bend	Held by the One

And *then* the characters materialize and meet each other for the first time, on the flanks of Solimar's Mountain on a far distant world.

The verse is actually Solimar's way of giving a hint to his worthy ones. The first half is the guide to the Godhead. The second half tells what to do when it is found. A complete explanation for the GM is in the descriptions of the Chasm and the Ice Cavern. But first, the players have to realize that the verse is more than just a recognition code . . .

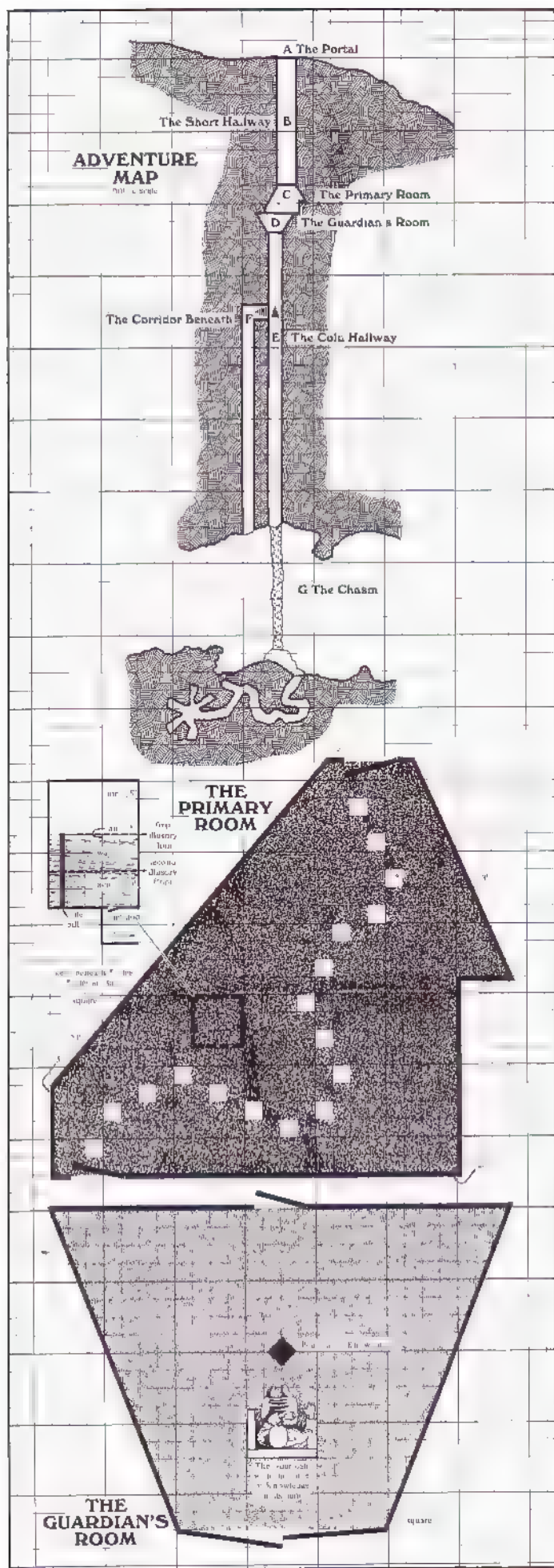
The Adventure

The gamemaster had better take a look at the Adventure Map, so that he has some idea of what is going on. The following is a room-by-room description of what lies ahead:

A) The Portal

The team of Solimar's champions materializes on a strange and exotic world, where the sky is a deep blood-red and the land is black. They are on the side of an incredibly steep mountain that narrows to a fine tapered point. Billows of white vapor stream from the summit. It resembles no earthly mountain.

Before the party is a massive double golden door, 15 feet wide and 30 feet tall. It has two golden handles. Written on the door, in a tongue no player recognizes (even though all can understand it), is the inscription: "Enter Ye Worthy Ones, to Solimar's Mountain."



When the door is opened, a loud thunderous voice will proclaim: "Behold, the champions of Solimar!" accompanied by triumphal martial music

B) The Short Hallway

The hallway has two details the players should know about, and one dandy ambush.

First, the hallway is well lit although there is no apparent source for the illumination (don't tell the players this, but it will be this way throughout the adventure).

Second, the walls, ceilings and floors of this hallway are of a grainy black stone, resembling granite but somewhat softer. (These rooms and passageways are hewn directly from the mountain. All the rooms are composed of this rock.)

The ambush is designed to get the party warmed up and used to working together. It shouldn't destroy a large portion of a party unless they are exceptionally unlucky or stupid. It may pick off one or two, however.

When the party reaches the middle of the short hallway, they will be attacked by three earth elementals who will step out of the walls and gain complete surprise. They will always be the most powerful type in the game system used and will have the maximum number of hit points. In *TFT*, use a ST of 40. Roll randomly for which unlucky party members will be attacked — if somebody gets tabbed more than once, that's life! If any of these jet-black elementals is charmed or captured, they will not know anything about Solimar's poem if questioned and will be totally uncooperative in response to any other request or order. After five turns under such magical control, they will die. Upon an elemental's death, it will appear to "melt" and sink back into the floor of the hallway, never to return.

C) The Primary Room

This room has four important features: the inscription on the ceiling, the floor, the tiles, and the exit.

The Inscription: In the strange tongue, runes proclaim, "The Primary Room of Solimar." (Note also that all dimensions of the room consist of prime numbers. This is the clue — prime-numbered tiles in the floor are safe, others are not.)

The Floor: This room actually has three floors

What appears to be the floor is, in actuality, an illusion. Objects passing through seem to disappear into the floor. Light does not pass through the illusion, so all that is below is in darkness. The illusory floor cannot be dispelled by any force at the party's disposal.

One foot beneath the first illusory floor is the surface of a pool of water. The water is nine feet deep. Players who stick their heads (and a light source — it's dark down here) through the first illusory floor, will see a second illusory floor ten feet below them. What they will *not* see is the 10 feet of acid beneath the second illusory floor. At the bottom of the acid pool there's yet another floor — this one's for real. Set into this real floor (20 feet below the first illusory floor) is a trap door. Characters falling through the first illusory floor will hit the water. If they are wearing any sort of armor, or they're carrying anything hefty (swords, supplies, and the like), they will sink to the bottom (the real bottom).

Think of it as a kind of sandwich: An illusory floor on top, a real floor 20 feet below, and in the middle, nine feet of water and 10 feet of acid, separated by a second illusory floor. The tiles in the first illusory floor are actually the tops of pillars which reach all the way to the real floor.

The acid does cumulative damage (1d6 per round for *AD&D* or *TFT*). It does not affect metal or enchanted items. It slowly digests leather, rope, and flesh (leaving the bones intact). Characters in the acid cannot open their eyes without having the acid burn them. Of course, they are in total darkness, so opening their eyes wouldn't help much anyway. There *are* a few ways out of the pool: First, players who take the plunge could climb a tile/pillar, requiring a saving roll against dexterity; second, they could climb the sides of the pool, again, requiring a roll against dexterity; or, finally, they could try to find the trap

door on the bottom. If they select this last option they will have to find the door, in the dark, taking damage all the time.

How far characters fall is left to the discretion of the game-master. Factors to take into account are: encumbrance, whether characters jumped or fell, length of rope connecting the characters (if they thought to secure themselves with rope), and the like.

The Tiles: Each tile is one square foot of gold carved with strange hieroglyphics. (The symbols, in the strange tongue, match the numbers given on the room map.) Safe tiles are marked with an asterisk (*) on the gamemaster's map. If these tiles are pried off, a pyramid-shaped object will be discovered. The thief (and only the thief) will recognize it as a key.

The other tiles give an electric shock when contacted by human weight. The equivalent of human weight — a sheet of ice covering the floor, for instance — will also set off tiles. Since ice is a conductor, the entire floor would then be charged . . . and unsafe. A poke with a staff will not normally set off a tile.

The electric shock damage is nasty: 2d10 for *AD&D*, 1d6 for *TFT*. In addition, shocked characters must make a saving roll against dexterity or a similar attribute to avoid falling off the tile. Characters failing that roll find themselves in the liquid, but they may make a second saving roll to see if they grabbed the tile or fell all the way to the bottom. If they grabbed the tile, they avoided the acid and can pull themselves out on the next turn . . . and get shocked again.

Moving from tile to tile requires a jump, which also calls for a saving roll against dexterity. The roll should vary depending on the length of the jump. For *AD&D* or *TFT*, the rolls would be.

to a neighboring tile	2 six-sided dice (12 = automatic failure) against Dex
jumping two tiles	3 six-sided dice against Dex
jumping three tiles	4 six-sided dice against Dex
jumping four tiles, or any distance up to 10'	5 six-sided dice against Dex

Again, failure to make the roll means the characters fell into the "floor." They may also have a saving throw to see if they can grab the tile they jumped for, or if they head for the bottom.

Thieves and similar classes roll two fewer dice than other classes.

The Exit: just a plain, unlocked door.

D) The Guardian's Room

This room has three features: a granite obelisk, iron-gray double doors, and an elderly fellow sitting on a stone throne.

The Pedestal of Knowledge: This obelisk must be touched by the players before the elderly man will allow them through the double doors. Those who touch the pedestal must make a saving roll against intelligence or a similar attribute, or lose intelligence because of the intense transfer of knowledge. This would amount to losing 1d6 intelligence in *AD&D*, or 1 IQ point in *TFT*.

Once characters touch the pedestal, their minds are imprinted with the same verse given them by the Visitrix. It is like a choir of angels singing in their heads, which performs quietly in the background of their minds unless they concentrate on listening to it.

The Iron Doors: These doors are controlled psychically by the elderly man. They appear to open and close without anyone operating them. The elderly man will open the doors when a character touches the pedestal and close them again if the character does not step through, but will reopen the doors at the request of any character who has touched the pedestal.

If a player who has *not* touched the pedestal tries to slip through the doors while they are open, the doors will react instantly. If a saving roll against dexterity is not made (on five six-sided dice, for *AD&D* or *TFT*), the character slams into the closing doors, taking 1d6 damage. The character must also make a saving roll against constitution to avoid unconsciousness for 1d10 turns (or rounds, in *AD&D*).

The Elderly Man: When a player steps into the room, the elderly man will say: "I am the Guardian of Solimar's Mountain.

Enter, Ye Worthy Ones. My purpose is to control these doors. Touch the Pedestal of Knowledge, and I shall let you pass."

If questioned, the Guardian will thwart all difficult questions with a smile, and say: "Forgive me, Worthy Ones, but only one of you is chosen, and the path ahead must decide." The Guardian, a being constructed by Solimar, simply chooses not to give the players any information, for to do so would be to interfere with the plan of Solimar.

The Guardian is physically weak and appears feeble. His hands and face are quite wrinkled. His head bulges oddly behind each ear.

His powers are those of the mind.

In *AD&D*, treat the Guardian as using all psionic modes and disciplines. He always wins initiative, and may attack four characters per turn (but the attack must be the same kind on each). AC: 10, psionic strength: 450, hp 8.

In *TFT*, the Guardian always wins initiative, and has the natural use (he pays no ST) of powers matching these spells: Confusion, Avert, Mage Sight, Telekinesis, Astral Projection, Trance, Possession, and Control Person. He may use one power per turn, and it will affect 1d6 characters. In addition, he has a constant, natural "eyes-behind." His stats are ST 8, DX 14, IQ 24.

Generically, the Guardian should have sufficient powers of the mind to defend himself against anything but an attack by the entire party.



Clenched in the Guardian's hand is a powerful and dangerous device — The Cube of Knowledge. It is two inches on a side, and winks in psychedelic colors that attract the attention. It is this which allows the Guardian to control the doors and have his great powers — and it will continue to do so, whether it is in physical contact with the Guardian or not.

If a character touches the Cube, a saving roll against intelligence or a similar attribute is indicated. (A five-dice roll, for *AD&D* or *TFT*.) If the roll is failed, the transfer of knowledge caused damage to the recipient's mind. This will not manifest itself outwardly, so characters in the party might not detect the change. Encourage the affected characters to role-play their new mental state, rather than just telling the party what happened. The results of failing the saving roll:

In *AD&D*, roll up three random insanities.

In *TFT*, the character is transformed into a zombie who must obey any command heard, from any character, regardless of who the command was directed at. The character will speak only when questioned, and will randomly answer "yes" or "no" regardless of the question.

Characters who make the saving roll gain intelligence points (three points for *AD&D* or *TFT*) and successfully receive the

The psionics in the Cube protect the doors from all magical and physical damage. Characters may still teleport or similarly move through the doors. If the Guardian is killed, the Cube will continue to protect (and keep locked) the doors unless the eight keys are used. The Cube can be destroyed in one way only — it disintegrates when the doors are unlocked by the keys.

The exact length of this corridor can be fudged, according to how movement works in your game system. The intent is that the average fighter-class character could run, full-out, down the corridor and finally freeze solid around Zone 6 and just perhaps (with great luck) Zone 7.

THE CORRIDOR BENEATH

square = 10
outdoor at milling
sunlight from globe of light

stairs leading down to F

Zones of Cold

the Globe of Frost - Inevitably Invulnerable

stairs down to Hallway

THE COLD (or HOT) HALLWAY

square = 1

chasm rises 1,000 feet
blowing in a round O' spinning
path by such as a light cut

thin ice bridge
(narrowly exposed)

library exit into hallway

winds of unbearable vapor
blowing upwards
of high velocity

below the chasm narrow
3,000 foot down 10 x 10 ft

THE CHASM

no oxygen
not a cliff

ravelling
searance

library exit into hallway

exit since beneath

pile of rock

sand pit
with incense

The Surviving

In Zone 4, as marked on the hall map, there is a 10 foot stretch of hall wall that is illusory, and that can be detected by a magical aura. Stepping through this false wall lands a character in a 10-foot cubic room, where a niche contains a globe. This is a Globe of Frost Invulnerability, which will protect characters from cold of all sorts so long as they remain within 10 feet of the artifact. Unlike most portions of this adventure, this room is in pitch darkness. The globe itself is about a foot in diameter and appears to be made of white marble. It weighs around 20 pounds. It must be carried with both hands.

The False Godhead: Behind the secret door on the same side of the corridor as the stairs leading down is an empty 30' x 40' room — empty, that is, except for the glowing ball of light hovering six feet off the ground near the back wall, and the inscription behind it. The inscription (again, in that strange tongue that everyone understands but no one recognizes) says, "Know-

edge is dearest to those who are lost, but when Godhead's the prize, evil's the cost." The ball of light glows brightly, but the light is slightly off-white, leaning toward a sickly green. This is the player's clue that this light is not wholesome, nor is it the Godhead they seek. Anyone making a saving roll against wisdom or a similar attribute (clerics or priests of Solimar should get a bonus) will feel an aura of evil about the light. A detect evil spell or something similar will confirm it.

If the players do not figure out the peril they face, and touch the false Godhead, two things will happen. First, a voice will recite the following poem (which is, by the way, a valid clue) — "Dig through the ice, then dig some more, find the key to unlock the door." Second, the player touching the False Godhead will be changed to evil. Only the first two players who touch the False Godhead will be so changed, but everyone who touches it will hear the poem. The two who are changed should be asked to be subtle, role-playing their new alignments with diabolical fiendishness. "Detect evil" spells and the like will not reveal the pair's new alignment. The only clue is that the pair have forgotten the poem the Visitrix gave them at the beginning of the adventure. Even if they hear it again from another player, they cannot remember it long enough to recite it back. If the other players think to use this test, it will work admirably. No other test will reveal the change.

The changed characters should be advised to continue to go along with the party and not betray them until the right moment — when maximum damage can be done. This will usually be in the big fight at the end of the adventure, but the gamemaster can prompt the changed characters to show their stripes earlier if he or she feels the time is right.

The other secret door leads down a short corridor which turns and slopes downward, ending in darkness. Players walking on the sloped section will find it is very slippery — and will slide down to the bottom unless a saving roll against dexterity is made. Thieves and similar classes get to roll one less die. When sliding characters reach the end of the corridor, they see it opens onto a 30' x 30' pit that is also 30 feet deep; they get one more saving roll against dex (again, 5d6) with no bonuses for thieves. If the second save is failed, they fall in, taking damage upon hitting the bottom (2d10 in *AD&D*; 1d6+1 in *TFT*). Then they'll have to deal with the monster down there. In *TFT*, two hungry Apeps will do just fine. For *AD&D*, a couple of Bulletes or Ankhegs may do the job. Gamemasters are free to adjust this as they wish.

The Hot Hallway: After coming down the first flight of stairs, the players will immediately notice another flight descending to their left. If they take this, it will lead to a short corridor and then turn left into a corridor 40 feet wide and the same length as the Cold Hallway (E). The player can see that this corridor ends in an opening, much like the one upstairs. In fact, the cor-

ridor is so much like the Cold Hallway that you can use that map for this corridor.

The Hot Hallway is also divided into seven zones — except the zones do heat damage, not cold. The damage numbers are identical, but the descriptions of what happens to the players are not. As in the Cold Hallway, protection spells will cut damage in half, and protection devices will protect fully.

Zone 1 — Players start to sweat. It is uncomfortably warm.

Zone 2 — It's hot enough to cause profuse sweating and shortness of breath. Mild damage (1d3 in *AD&D*; 1 point in *TFT*).

Zone 3 — Exposed skin turns red and a rash may start to break out. Metal is painful to touch. Characters in armor feel oppressed by the heat (1d4 damage in *AD&D*; 1 point per turn in *TFT*).

Zone 4 — Skin that touches metal is seared, leaving painful welts. Characters in plate or chain armor can go no further. (1d6 damage for *AD&D*; 2 points per turn for *TFT*).

Zone 5 — All characters must make saving throws vs. constitution or a similar statistic or fall unconscious. Water supplies evaporate, as do wine and magical potions. Scrolls and other paper items must make a saving throw or burst into flame spontaneously. (1d10 damage in *AD&D*; 1d6-1 in *TFT*).

Zone 6 — A second saving throw vs. constitution is required, this time at -4. Cloth and leather burst into flame unless magical, in which case they get a saving throw to avoid it. Blisters cover all exposed skin, lungs begin to take damage. (*AD&D* damage is 2d10; 1d6+2 in *TFT*).

Zone 7 — Metal visibly glows. Characters must make saving throw vs. constitution at -10 or burst into flame. Pain is excruciating. (3d10 damage in *AD&D*; 2d6 in *TFT*).

Characters that die in the last two zones cannot be raised by anything short of a wish. Any damage taken in this corridor is twice as hard to heal as usual.

Like the Cold Hallway, one 10-foot stretch of wall in Zone 4 is illusory — behind it is a dark, 10' x 10' room. In the room is a niche, and in the niche is a red globe, the Globe of Heat Invulnerability. It works just like the Globe of Frost Invulnerability upstairs — anyone within 10 feet of the artifact is immune to the effects of the hallway. If the Globe of Frost Invulnerability is brought into the Hot Hallway, however, it will shatter as soon as it enters Zone 3 — and the exact same thing will happen to the Globe of Heat Invulnerability in the Cold Hallway.

At the end of the Hot Hallway, there is a platform. Characters can look up and to the left and see the Ice Bridge (see the next section for a complete description), and they can see the Hidden Entrance below the bridge. That's the big payoff of taking this corridor: They see the entrance they otherwise would not have spotted without great trouble. Of course, they have no obvious means of getting over there but to turn around and take the Cold Hallway. Note that if characters try to run through the Hot Hallway to minimize the damage, they'll need to make a heck of a saving throw (6d6 vs. dex, for example) to avoid going off the platform and falling into . . .

G) The Chasm

The Chasm has many components: the Ice Bridge, the Winds, the River, the Light Above, the Far Platform, the Illusory Corridor, the Passageways, and the Hidden Entrance.

The Ice Bridge: The bridge is 100 feet long and spans the chasm in a graceful arch. Its surface is reasonably level. It is composed of frozen oxygen. When contacted by human warmth, it will give off a puff of vapor — oxygen. The secret to crossing the chasm (which has an atmosphere, but not a *breathable* one) is to use the oxygen ice of the bridge as an air source. If a player touches the bridge with bare skin, however, the skin will stick fast! Some water poured on the area will free the player; any number of creative solutions will work as well. The stuck character will take 1d6 damage in any event, however.

On the Ice Bridge are two crystalline creatures, each of which has three flaps dangling from its head. The flaps, when extended in the winds, are actually rotors that allow the animals to rotate and drift on the winds. Upon seeing the party, the animals will



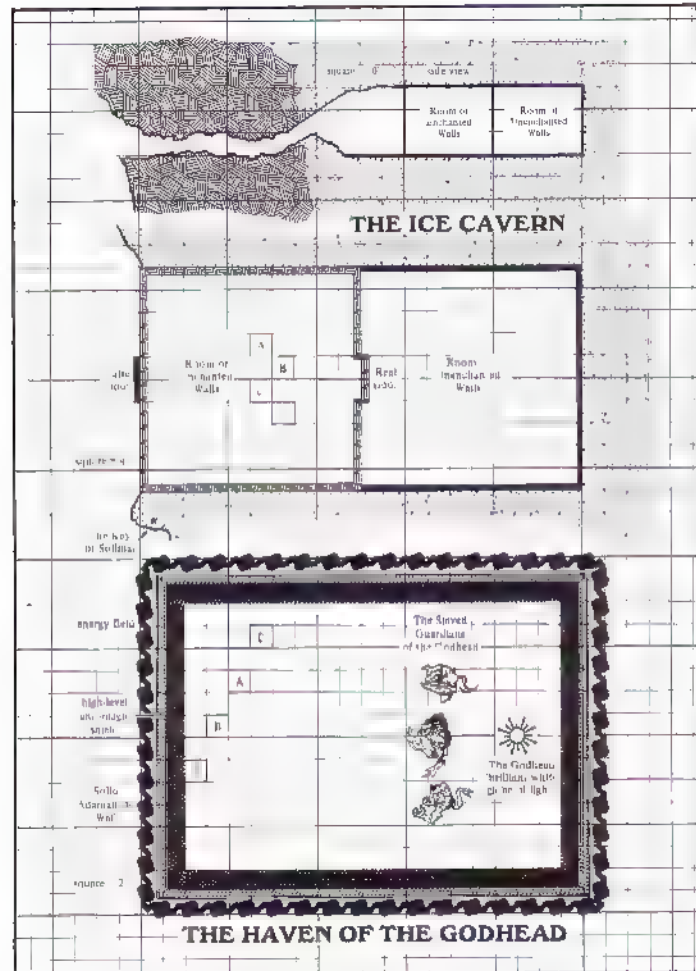
take off from their spots on the bridge and hover in the winds. (They do not need oxygen to live.) The creatures will watch the party peaceably unless attacked; if attacked, they will respond with a fairly large fireball apiece and then flee. (Fireballs: 10d6 in *AD&D*; 5d6-5 in *TFT*; regular saving throws apply). The result of being on the receiving end of a fireball while on the oxygen bridge will be, first, a whopper of a fire, and second, enough oxygen to keep the party alive for four rounds. If, on the other hand, the crystalline creatures are not molested, they will merely watch the party move past, settling back on the bridge after the party has crossed.

The Winds. Winds blow so strongly from the base of the chasm that a falling man could drift to the bottom with minimal damage (1d10 in *AD&D*; 1d6-2 in *TFT*). He would, however, have a tough time breathing on the way down — the wind contains no oxygen. It's mostly nitrogen with some other elements thrown in — characters cannot breathe in the wind. The Ice Bridge and the platforms provide some protection from the main force of the wind, but characters still cannot breathe there without using the oxygen-ice as an air source.

The River: The chasm plunges downwards about 3000 feet from the platform and bridge. The bottom will be shrouded in mist, but characters who concentrate will be able to see through gaps in the distant mist and spot a river of faintly blue water far below. (This river is of liquid oxygen.) There is nothing of interest down there.

The Light Above: The chasm continues upwards another 10,000 feet. At the top, a very dim red dot can be seen. This is the sky, seen through the crater at the summit of Solimar's Mountain.

The Far Platform: This platform is much larger than its counterparts at the entrance to the chasm. There is a pile of rubble here which, if moved, will cause a billow of oxygen to refresh the characters. The removed rubble reveals an opening that leads downwards into the passageways.



The Illusory Corridor: On the far side of the ice bridge, the party can see a lit hallway extending deep into the mountain. This is an illusion over a wall of rock, which will do suitable damage if characters run into it at any speed (the amount is at the discretion of the gamemaster — at high speeds, it might even be death).

The Passageways: The remaining Vile, thwarted in his search by the impenetrable doors at (H), has resorted to hewing the mountain down to locate the Godhead. He therefore excavated these passageways, in the process crossing veins of frozen oxygen which evaporated to form a breathable atmosphere within.

The Vile eventually encountered a great monster within a pocket of black sand and, believing it to be a guard left by Solimar, is driving passageways into the stone all about it.

The monster in the sand should be a very powerful monster in your game system, preferably an underground life form. In *AD&D*, a Purple Worm works fine; for *TFT*, use a giant Stone Beetle: ST 60, IQ 3, DX 11, armor stops 10 hits.

As for the Vile, it has two most important qualities. First, it cannot be destroyed by any means available to the players. (Even the impact of several asteroids would only knock it down.) Second, it has immense strength — it is driving the passageways with its bare fists. It is humanoid in shape, 30 feet tall, and solid black with red crystal eyes. Its basic nature is *evil*.

If the characters get the attention of the Vile by speaking to it, it will follow them relentlessly. If they start to tell it the Poem of Solimar, it will be able to complete the verse — having penetrated that much of Solimar's puzzle, but not knowing its solution. Its attention is entirely on acquiring the Godhead (though its thoughts cannot be read, being too basic), and it will follow any lead. (An appropriate solution to losing the Vile would be to create a distant voice chanting the Poem of Solimar. The Vile would pursue it, forgetting the party.)

The Vile will not fight the party, nor take notice of the players unless they speak to it. If the party watches for long enough, the Vile will cease digging the passage it is in, return to the sand pit, and begin to drive a new tunnel. As it crosses the sand, the monster in the sand will attack, but the Vile will not be hurt.

The Hidden Entrance: If the party successfully interprets the clues — "Nigh to the brink," or next to the chasm; "Below by the drink, beneath at the end," or under the far platform — they will find a narrow crack in the rock. If they can reach it — without magical means, it will require a difficult climb on the underside of the overhang — they graduate to (H): The Ice Cavern.

H) The Ice Cavern

The crack narrows to a height of three feet, makes an ascent, and then opens onto a water-ice cavern containing the False Door, the Enchanted Walls, the Real Door, and the Ice.

The False Door: The party encounters a golden door, 10 feet wide by 20 feet high, without handles, keyholes, or hinges, embedded in the ice. This is not a door. It is a trap. Any spell-caster trying to teleport or similarly move through the door will be trapped in the door, incapable of anything but thought. They will be trapped in mid-teleport until the Real Door is opened by the Key of Solimar (see below). If everyone teleports simultaneously, they will all be trapped.

The ice about the door, if chipped away, will reveal a wall built of black stone blocks.

The Enchanted Walls: The Enchanted Walls, which can be uncovered by excavating the ice, cannot be destroyed by anything in the power of the party (after all, they resisted the Vile . . .). The walls can be penetrated by spells of wizard sight or something similar so that the interior can be viewed, but like the False Door, they will trap those trying to teleport through.

Within the Enchanted Walls is a square room, with walls of black stone. The room has one unique feature: four tiles. Each golden tile is one foot square and is engraved with symbols in the strange tongue (translating to the "A," "B," "C," and "D," or their equivalents in that language, as shown on the map. Stepping on a tile causes a character to vanish (unfortunately, it will work for the Vile, too). See (I).

The Real Door: If the players dig long enough through the ice — "about round the bend" — they will come to a stretch of wall that appears identical to the rest, but which is plain stone. Penetrating the walls leads to a plain room containing another set of golden doors — this time, with hinges and a five-pointed indentation on the rightmost door. This door is enchanted like the walls and the False Door — the only way to enter is by use of the Key of Solimar (see below). The Key of Solimar fits exactly into the depression, causing the doors (and the key) to vanish.

The Ice: The ice is plain water ice, and can be melted or chipped away. The rooms are surrounded by ice on all sides (but the room floors and ceilings, like the walls, are enchanted).

Magically concealed in the ice to the right of the Enchanted Walls (see the map) is the Key of Solimar. It will fall out of the ice the moment anyone chips at the ice beyond the right of the walls. **IT DOES NOT LOOK LIKE A KEY.** Instead, it looks like a five-pointed star, of a sapphire-like material. It is very magical.

The Master Thief is the only character who can identify it as a key. The thief is also the only character who can safely use the key — any other character touching it will be instantly destroyed. This the thief knows, and can warn the party if he speaks in time. (If the thief was turned to evil by the False Godhead, this might be a good time to have him or her keep mum about the danger.)

If necessary, the key can be handled through an insulation of ice. It will then harm nobody. If inserted in the door by anyone but the Master Thief, the doors will open but the character brave enough — or foolish enough — to try this will be instantly destroyed — vanishing with the doors.

(Alternately, assuming both thieves were in play and the Master Thief is dead, the spirit of the Master Thief can come into play and instruct the other thief in the safe operation of this key. This would happen after the key has already destroyed one player character.)

I) The Haven of the Godhead

Characters stepping on tiles A, B, C or D will disappear and find themselves suspended in time — "time cycles on, until it is gone" — and incapable of anything except thought.

No characters will be released until *all* of the player characters have stepped on the tiles. The time suspension will then be broken, and the characters (including any who may have been trapped in the door or walls) will materialize near the golden tiles in the haven matching the tiles in the room of enchanted walls. The Haven of the Godhead contains several features: the Great Wall, the Tiles, the Slaved, and the Godhead.

The Great Wall: The Haven is surrounded by a wall of impenetrable rock, surrounded again by a high-level shield against magic, and is surrounded once again by a field of corrosive energy. Nothing can enter or escape the Haven except by the tiles or the will of the sun god.

The Tiles: The tiles are "connected" to those within the Enchanted Walls, but the system provides one-way transportation only — you cannot return to the room of enchanted walls this way. They are engraved with symbols matching those on the teleporting tiles.

The Slaved: Guarding the Godhead are three beings long ago enslaved by Solimar and subjected to his will. Each wears a golden band on his neck. They have one purpose: to kill all who enter this room. They always win initiative.

Many monsters could be used for these guards. In *AD&D*, a good set might be Ysgorl, Lord of Entropy (Slaad Lord) and two Eyes of Fear and Flame; in *TFT*, a Greater and two Lesser Demons would be in order. Use very powerful monsters.

The Godhead: Behind the trio of guards shines a bright, pure-white light, floating six feet above the floor. (It is a miniature sun.) The first player character to touch this light will assume the power of the sun, grow to immense size and brilliance, and win the adventure. All player characters and any surviving guards will bow before his glory — involuntarily.

Be Ye Witch, or Be Ye Magistrate, it makes no difference. All are suspect

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Should the Vile get to this room . . . he will immediately charge the Godhead, taking two turns to cross the room. (It may appear to the players that he is charging the guards. The Slaved Creatures will attack, but to no avail.) Should he contact the Godhead, he, and it, will disappear and the room will plunge into darkness. The characters will be trapped there for eternity. If a player reaches the Godhead before the Vile (some trick), and becomes the new God of the Sun, the Vile will cower in fear and dissolve to ashes on the spot.

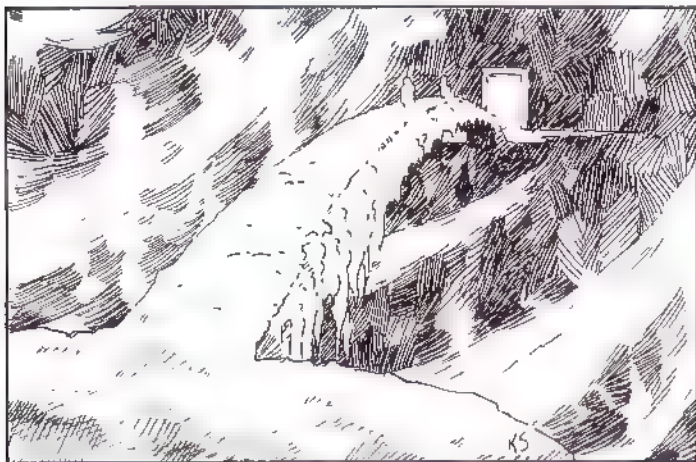
J) Ending the Adventure

Player characters who survive the adventure but do not become the new god of the sun will find themselves transported once again on the wind. They will awaken in their respective bedchambers, opening their eyes to see the sun bringing morning.

Advice for the Gamemaster

Do not be afraid to tamper with this adventure — these words are not engraved in stone. Every time we ran it, we polished it a little more . . . but there are certainly angles and twists we haven't encountered yet.

The number of characters in play should depend on the skill of the players. In one session, a mere five characters took on the whole thing and won (without clerics or physickers!). In another session, a 12-man team lost a third of its strength in the Primary Room alone. (It does tend to weed out the stupid).



If the characters become stumped . . . first remember that they have immense powers. Coddling the players is not required. If they goof — like riding Tenser's Disk off the side of a cliff (it hovers but doesn't fly) — let them take the consequences. This will make the adventure a real challenge.

In emergencies, the gamemaster may always call on the Visitrix. (Indeed, without Solimar to pray to, she is the only one the characters can address in prayer.) Her voice might be heard, saying "remember my words, oh ye worthy ones," or whatever the gamemaster deems appropriate.

Don't be afraid to use your own house rules. In fact, you may want to devise new spells if your game system lacks some sorts of spells you feel important on this quest. (If you design new spells, be sure to add useless new spells — locate mineral, or protection from steam, for instance — that have no purpose in this adventure. That way, the new spells don't tip off the players.)

The Generic Adventure

Throughout, this adventure has been described in generic terms, supplemented with specific guides for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* and *The Fantasy Trip*. There is no reason this game cannot be adapted to any system, or even other role-playing genres. Solimar might have been a great superhero whose

headquarters were raided by powerful arch-enemies, or the last of a great civilization whose artifacts keep the sun in a small solar system from fading away (and destroying a world of cute sentient creatures). These would require the GM to rethink portions of the adventure.

Converting *The Solimar Quest* to an espionage or Wild West adventure would strain the imagination — if you try it, and it works, drop us a letter and tell us about it.

The Player Characters

The allowed player characters are listed below, in priority terms. Guidelines are given for *AD&D*, *TFT*, and generic rules.

(1) Name: B_____ *The Master Thief*

AD&D: 15th level thief

TFT: must have Master Thief, Climbing, and Acrobatics talents

GENERIC: the world's most skilled thief

EQUIPMENT: enchanted dagger, ring of invisibility

(2) Name: A_____ *The Cursed Wizard*

AD&D: 21st level magic-user, but knows and has memorized every MU spell

TFT: knows enough spells to correspond to an IQ of 27, and is Literate

GENERIC: Pawn of a battle between two great wizards, "A" was crippled — he has extraordinarily low strength and dexterity (for physical tasks) — but gained unimaginable magical powers.

EQUIPMENT: none

(3) Name: G_____ *The Master Wizard*

AD&D: 16th level MU

TFT: sufficiently powerful to know enough spells to correspond to an IQ of 22

GENERIC: a powerful wizard lord

EQUIPMENT: none

(4) Name: F_____ *The Fighter with the Ring*

AD&D: 14th level fighter

TFT: a Veteran fighter, of great strength and good dexterity

GENERIC: a very tough fighter

EQUIPMENT: enchanted armor, enchanted sword, three enchanted javelins, and an extraordinarily powerful ring (in *TFT*: enchanted to the limit with powerful spells, in *AD&D*: roll up a Ring of Gaxx).

(5) Name: E_____ *The High Priest of Solimar*

AD&D: 19th level cleric

TFT: a theologian, physicker, and a mix of spells or talents as appropriate

GENERIC: the extremely powerful head of the major shrine of Solimar

EQUIPMENT: enchanted mace, enchanted armor, a scroll with one spell, and a ring with one wish

(6) Name: J_____ *The Fighter with the Rod*

AD&D: 16th level fighter

TFT: a Veteran fighter of good strength and great dexterity

GENERIC: a mighty warrior-lord

EQUIPMENT: enchanted armor, enchanted sword, enchanted axe, ring of invisibility, and . . .

The Rod of Solimar: As "J" materializes on the mountain-side, he will find a plain black rod in his hand, and hear the words: "This is the Rod of Solimar. Use it only against those who cause dissension in the party." No one else will hear these words, but they will all see the black rod.

When a member of the party causes dissension (or starts an attack, in the case of the ones who were turned by the False Godhead), the Fighter with the Rod *must* (no saving throw) draw the rod and attempt to strike the troublemaker with it. If it makes contact, the powers of the rod go into effect. If the

problem was a minor squabble, the player is teleported into a room sealed with ice, where he must duel one-on-one with a monster of the gamemaster's choosing. If he wins, he is teleported back to the party (who have been frozen in time while the fight took place), with any damage he may have taken. If the rod strikes one of the characters turned to evil, he must make a saving throw against disintegration or die instantly and irrevocably. If he makes the saving throw, he takes a lot of damage (3d10 in AD&D; 2d6 in TFT). If the Fighter with the Rod is one of the two who is turned to evil by the False Godhead, the rod will immediately shatter into dozens of small pieces, which will glow red-hot and smoke on the ground until they dissolve, which takes about three turns.

(7) Name: K_____ *The Priest of Solimar*
 AD&D: 13th level cleric, but also knows and has memorized all spells of levels 1-4
 TFT: a priest-wizard who knows all spells of IQ levels 8 to 12
 GENERIC: a mere priest, but one who has gained great knowledge in basic magic
 EQUIPMENT: enchanted armor, enchanted staff

(8) Name: H_____ *The Warrior of Solimar*
 AD&D: 13th level paladin
 TFT: priest-warrior (must have Priest and Veteran talents)
 GENERIC: a religious warrior, a crusader
 EQUIPMENT: enchanted armor, enchanted sword

(9) Name: D_____ *The Man of Many Talents*
 AD&D: 7th level fighter, 11th level magic-user, 10th level thief (a multi-classed character); a half-elf
 TFT: must have talents in fighting, thievery, and know a small selection of spells
 GENERIC: a Rogue
 EQUIPMENT: enchanted sword, enchanted cloak

(10) Name: C_____ *Solimar's Shepherd*
 AD&D: 14th level druid
 TFT: must have the talents Monster Followers II, Tracking, Naturalist, Animal Handler
 GENERIC: a man greatly in tune with the wilderness
 EQUIPMENT: enchanted hammer

(11) Name: L_____ *The Man of Fast Hands*
 AD&D: 12th level monk
 TFT: must have the talents Unarmed Combat IV and Running
 GENERIC: a man most powerful in Unarmed Combat and Self-discipline
 EQUIPMENT: none

(12) Name: I_____ *The Wilderness Priest*
 AD&D: 12th level druid
 TFT: must have Animal Handler, Priest, Monster Followers I
 GENERIC: a wilderness hermit in the service of Solimar
 EQUIPMENT: ring with one wish

FE

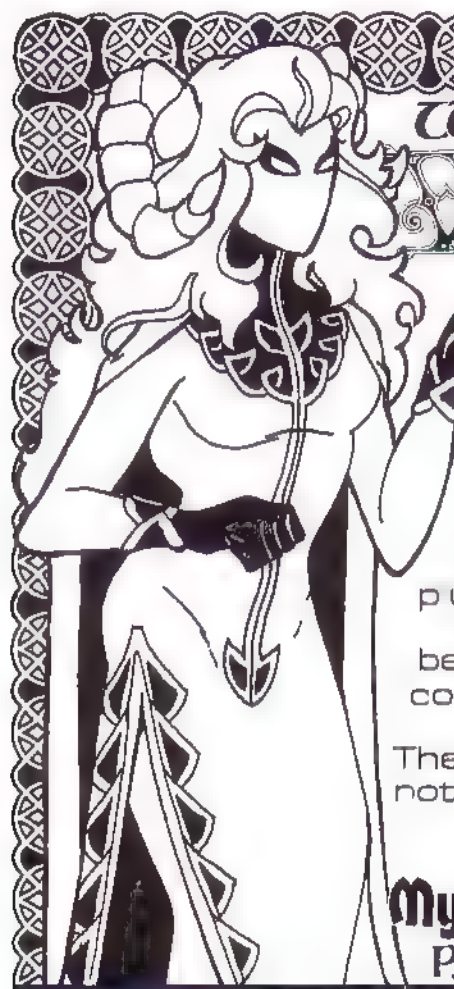
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Vampire Trap



by
Timothy Zahn

I've never really liked traveling through forests at night, and this trip, I decided, wasn't likely to change that attitude. Enough of the crescent moon's light got through the trees to keep me on the narrow road, but the protruding roots and hanging branches made the walk annoying at best and downright dangerous at worst. I thought back to the warm inn I'd left — hastily — three hours earlier and snarled one of my best curses as yet another low-hung branch bypassed my raised arm and scratched my cheek. "You and your stupid tricks," I growled at the sword hanging from my belt. "If you wanted a stroll through the woods, why didn't you just say so?"

"Sorry, Conakar," Whehalken said in the small voice he always uses when he's pretending to be repentant. "But you have to admit it was better to find out how jealous Neela's man was before you got too involved with her."

I snorted. "I was *not* getting involved with her. If you must know, I was hoping to pump her for rumors about the Borogash Jewel — innpeople are good for that sort of information."

"Oh, I don't suppose you'll get another chance now."

I didn't bother to answer. Djinn swords like Whehalken can create all sorts of neat illusions, and though I couldn't prove it, I was pretty sure Neela's ox-sized man had seen something quite a bit less innocent than what was actually going on. For a long moment I considered sticking Whehalken into the nearest tree and leaving him for the next fool to come along. But only for a moment. "All right," I sighed. "Truce. You obviously wanted me on the way to Uixil tonight, and we're going. So how about telling me why?"

Whehalken was silent for a few steps. "Have you ever heard of dryads?"

"Sure tree-dwelling spirits. Supposed to be rare these days."

"That's because they're relatively easy to trap," Whehalken said bitterly. "They make good slaves."

"Hmm." I chewed that over for a moment. "So, since Uixil is smack in the middle of a big forest, you wanted to sneak in and see if you could put all its wizards out of business before breakfast?"

I apparently used just a tad too much sarcasm, because Whehalken bristled. "Do I make fun of *your* quests?" he snapped.

"Sorry," I said, and meant it. It was a strange feeling to be companion to a Sword With A Mission, especially one whose goal was the elimination of the magic on which human civilization depended. But at the same time I couldn't help but feel a certain unwilling sympathy myself for all the spirits who, like Whehalken, had been trapped into doing all this work for us. Whehalken's quest, pure and simple, was to free as many of them as he could. My own, less noble, one was to provide transportation and to pick up any treasure that might get knocked loose in such encounters. "So why *are* we here in the middle of the night?"

"I wanted to see what sort of dryad population the forest had," he answered, "They're easier to detect at night."

Something in his voice made me prick up my ears. "What's wrong?" I asked in a low voice, feeling the back of my neck tingle as I tried to pierce the darkness around me.

"I don't know," Whehalken hissed back. "Something . . . somewhere behind you. Not human . . . not any kind of spirit, either. Very, very evil."

"Oh, terrific. Any suggestions?"

"Run for it."

I'd been through a lot with Whehalken, and I had no intention of facing something he was afraid of . . .

"Good evening, swordsman."

. . . but I wasn't about to run with that something drooling down my neck, either. I spun, simultaneously shrugging my pack off my shoulders and yanking Whehalken from his sheath.

He was standing about ten feet back, and at first I thought Whehalken had goofed rather badly. He was most certainly human: tall and gaunt, with eyes that could probably start fires, but human nevertheless. His face looked unnaturally white above his strangely cut black cloak, and he wore no weapons I could see. "Hello," I said. "A bit late to be wandering the forest, isn't it?"

"It is indeed late. Too late . . . for everything." Slowly, with almost insolent deliberateness, he started toward me.

And I discovered I couldn't move.

"Whehalken!" I ground out between stiff lips. He didn't answer, but I could feel him increasing his weight, forcing my sword hand down bit by bit . . .

And suddenly moonlight flicked from the blade squarely into my eyes. Changing his weight rapidly, he jiggled up and down in my hand, flashing again and again . . . and I was free.

The stranger was still out of range, but for the moment I had the advantage of surprise. Taking a long step forward, I swung Whehalken with all my strength.

I felt the slight resistance as my blade cut through his left upper arm; more as it sliced chest and right arm. Jumping back to avoid any spurting blood, I regained my balance and waited for him to collapse.

He didn't. A thin, blood-chilling scream of pain and rage escaped his lips, but otherwise I might just as well have hit him with a bow string. Even as I stood there, dumfounded, the pain left his face and he smiled the most satanic smile I'd ever seen. And this time, since I was avoiding his eyes by staring at his mouth, I saw the elongated canine teeth.

Abruptly, the trees around me rustled, and an instant later the faint moonlight was completely blotted out as hundreds of bats swarmed to the attack.

But this, at least, I knew how to handle. Pointing Whehalken straight up, I shouted, "Whehalken: whirlwind!"

The sword's djinn whirlwind was a trick that had saved my life on at least three other occasions, and the one Whehalken whipped up now was his strongest yet. The road lightened momentarily as the cloud of bats was blown to hell and gone, then darkened again as leaves, dust, and small branches took their place. Standing in the eye of the storm, I gripped Whehalken hard and hoped. But if the bats were mortal, their master was not. Every time the flying debris cleared sufficiently, I could see the vampire's eyes glowing balefully at me. "Whehalken!" I shouted above the whistling roar. "This isn't working!"

"I know! Get ready to run — better try for Uixil!"

"Right!" I took several deep breaths, set my feet — and, whipping Whehalken into his sheath, turned and shot down the road.

The whirlwind vanished as soon as I moved Whehalken, of course. For the first hundred yards I pictured the vampire gliding up behind me, ivory teeth aiming for my neck.

"Don't tire yourself, swordsman with djinn blade," his voice called. Glancing back, I saw that he hadn't moved. "I will save you for another night," he added, "when I can find a way to return the pain you caused me."

His laughter faded into silence. I ran another mile or two anyway before slowing to a dogtrot. Something about the way he'd said that made me almost wish I hadn't hit him.

I had to pound on four doors in Uixil before I found someone willing to let me in, and even then the owner and his two eldest sons kept me pinned against the inside wall with pitchforks until I donned a proffered garlic necklace and proved my face showed up clearly in a mirror. I thought it best not to mention Whehalken's peculiarities, so I settled for a half-truth that the vampire had let me go with the promise of a return engagement. I didn't expect the family to have much sympathy to spare for strangers, and was mildly surprised therefore when I was offered a place in their home for as long as I wanted it. I had lost my bedroll along with my pack, but they scraped up an extra blanket and some straw and I assured them it was more than adequate. They bade me good night and returned to their own pallets, I picked a corner where I wouldn't be too close to any windows but could get to anything that came through the door without stepping on anyone. Lying down, I waited until everyone had had time to fall asleep again, and then pulled Whehalken close for a quiet consultation.

"A vampire," I whispered. "Is that as bad as I think it is?"

"It's worse," Whehalken said wearily. "Cutting through his chest like that should have at least knocked him down and given you time to hunt up some garlic to stuff in his mouth. But you saw what happened."

"Yeah — nothing. How come?"

"I don't know. Maybe he's a new type, something that hasn't gotten further south. Or maybe he keeps all the life force he drains from his victims instead of using it to make new vampires out of them."

"Wants to keep the territory all to himself, huh? Seems sort of silly."

"Not really. I've been hearing rumors lately that the Kagan Trospil is finally going to have his war with the Barrisky Stronghold. If that happens, that route will be closed for a long time."

"Which means *this* road is suddenly about to become popular." I pursed my lips tightly. "But as long as they travel by day —"

"If daylight travel were possible," Whehalken cut me off, "don't you think these people would have left long ago?"

"Good point." A couple of obvious plans occurred to me, but it made more sense to wait until I could discuss them with the townspeople. Presumably, they'd already found out what didn't work and why. "All right, then. This far north he almost certainly hasn't tangled with a djinn before, and he *did* admit you'd hurt him. So, what can we do to kill him?"

"Vampires can't be killed. They're already dead . . . in a sense."

"I stand corrected," I said impatiently. "Then how can we cripple him, break his teeth, or kick him out of the forest? You're a spirit — you must know a way."

"What makes you think that?" he asked cautiously.

I snorted. "Come on, now; I'm not *that* uneducated. Undead and spirits don't mix — there are half a dozen proverbs along that line. So what can you do against him?"

Whehalken was silent for a long minute. "There's only one way I know of to immobilize a vampire permanently," he said at last. "But . . . we can't use it."

"Why not?"

"Because I said so."

"Okay, okay; don't get huffy. I'll settle for a way to get everyone in Uixil out of here."

"Conakar, it's time you learned I'm not the Wizard's Cornucopia — you can't just make a wish and expect me to perform. There are limits to my abilities, and the fighting of vampires is pretty well outside all of them."

He fell silent. "All right, just relax," I said as soothingly as I could. For the first time in our years of association, he sounded edgier than I felt. "If they couldn't be stopped somehow they'd have taken over the world long ago. I'm going to sleep now; we'll come up with something in the morning."

With the late night and all, I didn't wake up until an hour or so after sunrise. Of the six members of the family, only the mother and the two youngest children were still at home, the others having already left for the fields. I wolfed down the meager fare that passed for breakfast and then went out to see what Uixil looked like in daylight.

If Whehalken had truly expected to find spirit-enslaving wizards, he was sorely disappointed. Uixil was like any of a thousand little villages I'd passed through in my lifetime, except that with its farmland hedged in by the surrounding forest it was perhaps poorer than most.

I wanted to call an immediate meeting of the village elders or whoever was in charge here, but Whehalken pointed out that an interruption during the most productive part of the working day probably wouldn't be welcome. So instead I took a quick walk around and then returned to the house where I'd slept. The woman was reluctant to tell me how I could be useful, but with a little prodding admitted that firewood was always in short supply, as no one liked going into the forest even in broad daylight. Borrowing their axe, I headed toward the road I'd come in by, which happened to be the closest part of the forest. With only minor qualms — the sun *was* shining brightly, after all — I walked into the shade.

And immediately found the answer to one of my questions.

"Whehalken, I don't remember the road curving like this last night," I murmured.

"It didn't," he said. "It was perfectly straight for at least the last half mile into Uixil."

"Well, it's curving now." I walked a few paces into the curve and tried to peer further down it. "I'd like to believe it's an illusion, but it sure seems real."

"It's no illusion," Whehalken answered grimly. "The trees really seem to have moved since last night."

I took another half dozen steps. "Damn thing winds around like a drunken whipwraith," I growled. "Assuming the vampire did this . . . how?"

"Probably hasn't moved all that many trees — maybe just blocked the main road and uncovered a path that was already there," Whehalken suggested. "It's only a four-hour walk to the outer edge of the forest if you go straight. This may be how he keeps the villagers from getting out during the day."

"What about people coming in, though? They ought to become suspicious when the road isn't the way they remembered it."

"Unless the road shifts around behind them once they're deep enough into the forest. By the time they knew something was wrong, it would be too late."

"I thought vampires couldn't operate in daylight."

"They can't. But dryads *can*."

The forest was feeling more and more oppressive. Checking my directions carefully, I started back to what was left of the main road. "You think he's talked some of them into helping him?"

"Or else trapped them into it." Whehalken hesitated. "I've never heard of vampires having that ability, but this one's already done some unlikely things."

"Maybe he was a wizard before he was turned," I suggested, feeling my spirits rise a bit. Trapped spirits would give Whehalken all that much more incentive for destroying the vampire,

besides the obvious one of saving my neck. "Anyway," I continued, "it's clear we're not just going to walk on out of here. Let's get some wood and get back to the village."

I had agreed with Whehalken not to cut into the villagers' day, but word of my midnight arrival spread quickly, and by noon even the farmers were drifting back from the fields to look me over. I waited until enough of them had gathered and then called a council of war.

The fact that I'd escaped the vampire once — sort of — made me something of a hero in their eyes and they were eager to answer my questions; unfortunately they couldn't tell me much that was new. The vampire had appeared suddenly about five months previously and cut Uixil off from the rest of the world, killing eighteen people, before the rest knew what was happening. Where he'd come from, why he was so powerful — all the important things — they didn't know.

"Have you tried sending someone for help?" I asked. "The road was straight enough last night when I came in. If you wrapped up good in garlic he shouldn't be able to bother you."

"Larin tried that, a month after the vampire appeared," the blacksmith said, shrugging his massive shoulders uncomfortably. "We heard his screams within a few minutes . . . along with the howling of wolves."

My skin prickled. "Was he armed?"

"With my own sword," the other replied, his eyes looking haunted. "It kept me alive through the entire Siege of Plaildean, but could not save him."

"Um," I grunted, looking at the blacksmith with new respect. Plaildean was before my time, but I'd heard of it. Only the best had walked away from that one. "Still, it might be worth another try. Do you have enough extra garlic for me to use?"

They tried to talk me out of it, but not too hard. Those who saw me as their heaven-sent deliverer were too excited by the chance to be rid of the vampire . . . and those who saw me more realistically probably thought a good feeding would take the

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heat off the local populace for a while. Me, I was counting on the fact that the late Larin hadn't been carrying a djinn sword. I was counting on it a lot.

We left that night just as the first stars were appearing, festooned so heavily in garlic I felt like a walking salad. The road was straight again . . . and I got all of a hundred yards down it before the vampire struck.

I'd expected him to realize that sending wolves against a djinn sword would likely result in a slaughter of the mangy beasts; but I hadn't considered the possibilities of his other army. With only the barest warning from Whehalken I was suddenly enveloped in a cloud of bats, ripping and tearing at the strings of garlic flowers over my chest and shoulders. I had Whehalken out in a flash, and an instant later his whirlwind blew them off me. I lowered him, took three more steps, and raised him again as the bats swarmed back.

It was as elegant a trap as I've ever been caught in. As long as I held Whehalken motionless he could keep the bats at bay, but every time I moved the wind would die and the bats would return. And with each engagement I lost a bit more of my garlic shield. At this rate I'd be less than halfway through the forest before the vampire got me.

Five steps at a time — the bats harassing me the whole way — I retreated back to Uixil. Alerted by the odd commotion, the farmer was ready at the door when I ducked back in, slamming it behind me in time to keep most of the bats out. I expended all my frustration on the two that did slip in, slicing them up in midair and kicking the pieces into the fire. Then, after assuring the family I was all right, I went back to my corner and lay down.

"Take it easy, Conakar," Whehalken said softly when the others were asleep. "We didn't expect to make it out on our first try."

"Maybe you didn't," I retorted, "but some of these people did."

"Yeah; I saw the look on the kids' faces, too. But they've got to learn sometime how the real world works." He sounded strangely introspective as he said that, but I was too busy with my own thoughts to wonder about it.

"Maybe. But even in the real world peasants sometimes win." I hesitated. "Tell me, does your repertoire of illusions include that of making someone invisible?"

Whehalken has never been known to be slow on the uptake. "Yes, but remember that I have to be stationary the whole time. And my range is less than a mile."

"Might be good enough. If his spies at the edge of the forest don't report I've left, I may be able to slip by everything else, especially if I keep off the road."

"Slip past all those bats? Forget it. And even if you did, you'd get lost for sure. Even in broad daylight, with me along to help, you'd have trouble in a forest this dense."

"Maybe. But I've got to try. And the vampire won't be expecting another attempt this soon." I sat up and quietly put on my boots. "Come on — we'll set you up just inside the door," I whispered, picking him up. "You can tell them in the morning where I've gone."

"Wait a minute," Whehalken said, his voice oddly strained. There was a long pause. "All right," he sighed finally. "There's one other way to stop a vampire. In the morning we'll do it."

I thought about asking why he hadn't mentioned this mysterious method earlier, but something in his voice warned me to leave him alone for now. Laying back down, I frowned thoughtfully at the ceiling until I fell asleep.

The bonfire we'd lit at dusk had burned down to a mere healthy blaze an hour later when I stepped out of the farmer's house and placed myself between the fire and the nearest point

of the forest. Drawing Whehalken, I set him point downward in the soft ground and filled my lungs. "Vampire!" I bellowed. "Come face me!"

For a moment there was silence. Then, more felt than seen, a vapor drifted out of the forest toward me. Five yards away it began to coalesce and a minute later a well-remembered face smiled at me. "Well met, swordsman. Are you so soon tired of life?"

I gripped Whehalken's hilt tightly, being careful not to move him. "You misunderstand, vampire," I told the creature. "I called you here to complete *your* destruction."

His smile broadened. "You stand alone, armed only with a sword whose limits are already known to me, and speak of my destruction? Or did you foolishly think a simple bonfire would affect me?"

"The bonfire's just there to keep your proxies at bay — to make you fight your own battles for once."

His eyes flashed unpleasantly at that. "For the pleasure of an insult you risk a great deal."

"Do I? You say you've tested my sword's limits. But I don't think you've ever tangled with a free djinn before. You might find that a different proposition entirely."

The smile faded into hardness, and he glanced down once at Whehalken. "I grow weary of your bluffs, swordsman. No spirit who could free himself from entrapment would fail to do so, and you clearly lack the required knowledge. Your djinn is still within your sword, and that is where he will remain." Slowly, he started toward me. "Your bluff is thus called . . . and I am going to enjoy this."

"So am I," I said, my heart thudding painfully. Every sense seemed keyed up: I could feel the bonfire's heat on my back and the hardness of Whehalken's hilt against my palm; see my shadow flickering past the vampire and the gloom of the forest beyond. Gritting my teeth, I waited until the last possible moment. As the vampire's outstretched hands came within a foot of my face I ducked, whipping Whehalken in a vertical arc that would've cut the arms off a mortal. The vampire opened his mouth to laugh.

But moving Whehalken had caused his invisibility illusion to vanish — and behind the vampire the village blacksmith suddenly appeared, his hands already arcing down with the sharpened tree branch Whehalken and I had cut that morning. An instant later the vampire jerked forward, the stake ramming two inches of itself out the front of his chest. Without a sound, he toppled stiffly to the ground, that last laugh frozen forever in his throat.

Even in the predawn gloom my abandoned pack was easy to find, lying in the middle of the road exactly where I'd dropped it two nights earlier. It felt a lot heavier than I remembered, though. "I hope you don't expect us to go very far today," I told Whehalken. "We're going to find a good inn and catch up on my sleep as soon as we can."

"Sorry," he said, his mind clearly elsewhere. "Thanks for sneaking out of Uixil, though. I really appreciate it."

"Forget it," I shrugged. "I wasn't wild about the proposed celebration, either, particularly when the village couldn't really afford it." I hesitated; but I knew I had to bring this up. "We really should've explained what you did, though, before we left. The story's bound to spread, and you're going to get a lot of people believing you can really stop a vampire with a simple stake through the heart."

"I know," he sighed. "I'm sorry, Conakar, but I . . . just couldn't."

I nodded understanding. "Yeah. But look, you immobilized a *very* nasty vampire, and freed a whole lot of dryads from his influence in the bargain. I don't think you need to be ashamed of what you did."

"In other words, I should learn how the real world works?"

I winced at the self-condemnation in his tone. "I don't suppose there's any way you can come back and free him."

"Not unless you want the vampire digging his way out from under that cairn you built. He's not dead, you know, or even unconscious; just frozen in place. Thanks to me."

He lapsed into silence again. I thought of that old proverb again — *undead and spirits don't mix* — but this time I finally

understood what it really meant. As for Whehalken and his noble quest: What was he feeling now, knowing he had deliberately trapped an innocent dryad in that tree branch, trapped it and locked it into an eternal embrace with the vampire?

I didn't want to know. I felt bad enough as it was.

FE

Djinn & Tonic

TFT Gaming Notes for "Vampire Trap"

by Steve Jackson

Timothy Zahn's djinn blade Whehalken exists in a world where wizards are powerful — but lazy. Much magic is done, not by the wizards themselves, but by spirits the wizards have captured and bound into blades, tools, and other useful items. Whehalken himself is such a trapped spirit. His purpose in life is to free other trapped spirits until (we assume) he himself can be freed from the sword in which he is bound.

Unfortunately, it's hard to use Whehalken's world in *TFT* — because *TFT* includes no rules for djinns or, for that matter, for trapped spirits. But this can be rectified. Read on.

Djinn

A djinn is a powerful spirit, similar in some ways to a demon, but basically good in nature. Djinns are not native to the game world, but many visit it for their own reasons, and some become trapped. A free djinn can be used as a very powerful character belonging to the GM. In any alliance with player characters, a free djinn would be likely to demand the upper hand. A djinn can look entirely human when it suits him.

A djinn would have ST 30, DX 14, IQ 16 or better, and MA 14 on the ground; a djinn can also fly, at no ST cost, with MA 20. It can strike with its hands for two dice damage. There is a 1-in-6 chance that a djinn illusion will bring an angry *real* djinn.

All djinns are natural wizards, but they can learn talents as though they were heroes. Almost any djinn will have the following spells: Teleport, Blast, Repair, Lightning, Control Elemental, Whirlwind, all Illusion spells, and Dispel Illusion. Other spells vary with individual djinns. Free djinns are likely to possess one or more potent magical items, and are likely to be motivated by the desire to possess other such items.

Any djinn can immediately detect the presence (within 50 feet) of an item containing any sort of trapped spirit. Djinns will react at -3 to the owner of any such item (-5 if the trapped spirit is another djinn). Any reaction worse than "neutral" means the djinn will attempt to free the trapped spirit. Since any djinn can free a trapped spirit merely by touching it, it's hard to protect a trapped-spirit item from a djinn who knows about it. However, unless the modified reaction was very bad, the djinn will take no action against the owner of the item after freeing the spirit. (A djinn does *not* have to be free to detect and free other spirits, but it can't free itself. In the stories, Whehalken needs Conakar, the warrior, primarily as a means of transportation, since so many of his abilities have been lost.)

The Whirlwind Spell

You can't very well have a djinn, or a djinn sword, without whirlwinds. The *Whirlwind* spell requires IQ 14 to learn, and can use anywhere from 1 to 4 ST points per turn. Each ST point expended is multiplied by 20 in the whirlwind — i.e., spending 1 point creates a whirlwind like that of an ST 20 air elemental, spending 2 points creates a whirlwind like that of an air elemental of ST 40, and so on. Once created, the wind lasts for only five turns, but the spell can be continued thereafter, five seconds at a time, by spending more strength. The amount of ST the caster uses may vary with time. A wind may start out at ST 20 and, five seconds later, be continued at greater strength.

For those who don't have *TFT: Advanced Wizard* handy, an air elemental's whirlwind is a mere annoyance unless it has ST of 30 or more. A

whirlwind of ST 30 will knock victims down unless a saving roll (three dice vs. ST) is made. Add one die to the saving roll for every full 10 ST of the elemental (or the whirlwind). At ST 60 or better, the wind is so strong that anyone missing their saving roll will be blown away and killed, unless they can make a second saving roll (four dice vs. DX) to grab something.

Like all whirlwinds, a magic whirlwind has an "eye" in the center where there is no effect. At the caster's option, this eye can (a) be his hex only, or (b) be his hex plus the six surrounding hexes. Outside the eye, the whirlwind's radius may be six to 18 hexes across, at the caster's option, and changing as he wills. This is a Creation spell.

The Bind Spirit Spell

This spell requires IQ 13 to learn. The same spell will work to bind any sort of spirit for any purpose (actually, the details differ, but once the spell is learned in its basic form, it is easy to master any variation you might need).

When the spell is cast on any spirit, that spirit gets a four-die saving roll vs. IQ. A successful roll means that the spirit has escaped trapping. (In the case of an elemental that was already controlled, the spirit immediately escapes control as well.) Large elementals (over ST 20) and all other spirits will immediately attack the wizard who attempted to trap them; smaller elementals will flee.

The spell can be used to bind (or attempt to bind) the following spirits: Earth Elementals, Air Elementals, Fire Elementals, Water Elementals, Ghosts, Wights, Djinns, Lesser Demons, and Greater Demons. Needless to say, it is very hazardous to attempt to bind a demon; few try it, even fewer live to tell the tale.

There are a great many items that can be made by binding spirits. In every case, the wizard must have the spirit and the base item (a sword, axe, crystal, or whatever) in his presence in order to cast the spell. Referees should feel free to add to the list below, with the only restriction being that the powers of the final item should have some close relation to the nature of the trapped spirit. If a campaign includes other types of spirits not listed in the basic *TFT* rules (dryads, for example), they too can be trapped by this spell and used in appropriate ways.

This is a Thrown spell, and Remove Thrown Spell will "unbind" any bound spirit. The spirit will make a reaction roll to the unbinder (at +2) and will leave the vicinity as soon as it finishes thinking (or attacking) the unbinder.

Earth Elemental

Sword (requires elemental of ST 8 or better): +2 damage; granite-gray blade; can be used to tunnel through the earth as though it was a regular digging tool.

Pick (requires elemental of ST 12 or better): +1 damage as a weapon; lets user tunnel through earth at double speed.

Pillar (requires elemental of ST 6 or better): allows a pillar to support four times the weight it otherwise could.

Air Elemental

Sword (requires elemental of ST 8 or better): +2 damage; silver-gray blade; lets owner fly at MA 6

Ring (requires air elemental of ST 6 or better): lets owner fly at MA 8. Slower than the *Flight* spell, but easier!

Fire Elemental

Sword (requires elemental of ST 8 or better): +2 damage, doubled against creatures that are harmed by fire; red-gray blade; hot to the touch.

Light crystal (requires elemental of ST 6 or better): will provide illumination indefinitely. One ST 7 elemental is about equal to one modern 100-watt bulb.

Heatstone (requires elemental of ST 10 or better): will maintain a temperature of about 100 degrees F, forever. Useful in winter! Uses a stone about a foot in diameter.

Water Elemental

Sword (requires elemental of ST 8 or better): +2 damage; blue-gray blade; lets user walk through water at normal MA and breathe water.

Ring (requires elemental of ST 4 or better): lets wearer swim as though he/she had the Swimming talent.

Flask (requires elemental of ST 6 or better): magically refills itself with enough water to supply the needs of one person for each three ST the elemental had.

Djinn

Sword (like Whshalken): +3 damage; mirror-bright blade; able to speak any language. Djinn blades will not lie, but will try to trick their masters if they think they know what is "best."

A djinn blade retains the illusion spell(s) the djinn knew, and can use them freely, with no ST cost, but only while the blade is held immobile. It also retains the Whirlwind spell, at a maximum of ST 80 and no ST cost, but only while the blade is immobile. The djinn can vary the blade's length and width by up to 20%, and change its weight from nearly nothing to as heavy, at will.

Bottle. The "standard" genie in a bottle. Not as potent as some stories would have it, though. The bottle must be sealed when the wizard binds the djinn. If it is broken, or even opened, by one who does not know and say the djinn's name, the djinn escapes. (On binding a djinn, a wizard learns its name.) If the djinn's name is spoken, the speaker can give the djinn one command which the djinn will follow to the best of its great ability, *without* trying to trick the speaker! However, once each

command is fulfilled, the djinn gets a saving roll (six dice on IQ) to escape. However, most djinns escape because some human deliberately steals the bottle and releases them, either accidentally or on purpose. The gratitude of a deliberately released djinn is legendary.

Lesser Demon

Sword: As for a wight sword, but doing +5 damage! Speaks all languages and will constantly try to get the user to do evil deeds.

Cursed Gem: Locked in a jewel, the demon causes a permanent and continuing Curse (-3 on all die rolls) within a radius of 20 megahexes.

Greater Demon

Sword: As for a lesser demon, but +10 (!!) damage. Once per week, the owner/user must make a three-die saving roll on IQ. If he fails, he is totally dominated, for that week, by the demon. Four successive failed rolls will place the unfortunate swordsman under the demon's control forever.

Cursed Gem: As for a lesser demon, but the curse is -6 to all rolls.

Ghost

Sentinel: Bound into a door, post, gate, etc., a ghost becomes a permanent (if somewhat gloomy) watchman.

Advisor. Bound into a ring or other item of jewelry, a ghost can be used as a source of information.

Wight

Sword: A wight sword (or "wraith") does +3 damage. In battle, it looks like a flaming sword. Can speak, but often lies. Does double damage to creatures harmed by fire. Cannot control minds, but will constantly try to persuade its owner (and anyone else nearby) to help it complete the purpose or quest that originally turned it into a wight.

Sentinel: As for a ghost, but doing one die of damage to anyone who touches it, except the binding wizard and those "introduced" by him to the sentinel.

Again, all the above are representative examples. There are many more possibilities, especially in a magic-rich game world — and using bound spirits will make magic much easier to accomplish! Price of bound-spirit items is entirely up to the GM.

FG

Quest of the Great Jewels

The third War of the Great Jewels is over, having ended with the intervention of the Powers-That-Be, but not before most of Zorplia was laid waste and the greater part of its inhabitants destroyed. The Powers-That-Be have sealed the Great Jewels (talismans of immense power) and many of the lesser talismans in the Forbidden Cities and set enchanted armies to guard them. Only scattered remnants of the four peoples remain. Dragons and other terrors roam the land. Can you marshal your forces and come forth to be the sole ruler of Zorplia?

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The Solitary Vampire

Solo Undead

by Steve LaPrade



The great figures of horror, at least the really, truly frightening ones, have always been solo acts — Frankenstein's creation, the Wolfman, the Creature from the Black Lagoon, and, of course, Dracula. But, until now, there hasn't been a good solitaire game based on any of these creatures.

That has changed. Now, would-be vampires can play solitaire Steve Jackson's *Undead*.

At this point, I can hear protests. Solitaire *Undead*? It can't be done. How can a solitaire player duplicate Dracula's surprise attacks on the hunters, or their ambushes of him? Besides (some wise guy is sure to note), the summer 1983 Steve Jackson Games catalog reports of *Undead* "Solitaire playability zero."

Let's look at some of the obstacles to adapting *Undead* for solitaire play, and how these problems can be overcome.

How can Dracula search for hunters when there is only one player? Simple. The solitaire player takes the part of Dracula at the start of the game. Take some blank counters or small pieces of paper. Mark an "X" on one of them. Be sure you have one counter for each area of London on the game map. Then shuffle the counters and place one face-down on each area of the map. Whenever Dracula wants to utilize his one search per turn, he picks an area and turns over the counter. If there's an "X" on it, he has found the hunters and can fight them. What could be simpler?

How can you handle Dracula/hunter fights when there is no hunter-player to decide when to retreat or how to set up hunter characters? This doesn't take much work to overcome. Before starting play, roll for the number of pieces of furniture to be encountered in indoor combat. Then roll 1d6+2 for the number of coffins to be encountered in graveyard

combat. Decide at the start where they will be placed, bearing in mind that no item may block a door and no two items may be side-by-side. This setup will remain the same throughout the game.

Before combat can be conducted in a particular location, the hunter counters must be placed. This is done by rolling 1d6. Each room or crypt is seven squares by five squares; roll one die for each row of five: If a six is rolled, no hunter is placed in that row; if a one is rolled, one hunter is placed in the bottom square of that row; a two puts the hunter in the next square, a three in the next, a four in the next, and a five, in the top square of that row. The particular hunter counters are selected at random, and placed face-up in positions determined by the die rolls described above.

Exception: If the number rolled would place the hunter on a piece of furniture or a coffin, the hunter-counter is placed on a square just below the item. If the item is at the bottom of a room, the counter is placed just above the item.

Keep rolling until all hunters are placed. When this is accomplished, Dracula will pick his entrance as usual, and combat can begin. Since there is no hunter player to decide when to flee, use this rule: If two hunters are killed (or one, if the party was three or fewer to begin with), the other hunters will flee unless Dracula has fewer than 10 strength points. In this case, surviving hunters will stay and fight to the bitter end, or until Dracula chooses to flee.

This brings us to objection number three:

A solitaire game can't use the newspaper headlines since there is no hunter-player to decide whether to act on them or ignore them.

Keep track of newspaper headlines and the Credibility rating just as in a regular game of *Undead*. When there is a news

event (regardless of whether it's an actual or rolled one), roll one die. On a roll of 1-3, the hunters will search the area in which the event took place. On a roll of 4-6, they will ignore the event. If there are two or more news events, the hunters will check out one of them. If there are two events, give one the numbers 1-3 and the other 4-6. If there are three events, give them 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6, respectively. A roll of 1d6 determines which event is followed up.

For the solitaire game, the hunters' turn works like this: Three location rolls are made. These rolls determine where the hunters will search for coffins. (If one area is out of coffins, another roll is made.) There are three searches per hunter turn. As usual, if a coffin is turned up, all coffins in that area are discovered.

To simplify the game start, I use this rule: Lay out all inverted coffins and spare furniture, as long as the total number of coffins does not exceed the number Dracula is allowed. Put some counters on every area of town. Start the game with Dracula having 22 strength points, to show he's been hiding coffins for three days since his arrival in England.

At the end of every Dracula turn, Dracula is placed face-up in the area where he wishes to stay. If the hunters happen to roll that area as a location roll and uncover all the coffins, Dracula is discovered and combat commences.

Now, someone will raise a fourth problem with playing solitaire *Undead*:

There is no hunter-player to decide when to recruit rather than search.

This requires one additional piece of bookkeeping. Keep a list of the number of hunter turns. Every third turn, all but one leader will stay home to recruit. If there is only one leader, he stays to recruit. If there are two leaders, one recruits while the other leads a search party. If there are three or more leaders, one leads a search party through London while the others recruit.

Note: If hunters have been wounded, they will stay home and out of the action until their strength points are at least half their starting total.

Now we come to the toughest nut to crack:

How can a solitaire game duplicate the hunters surprising Dracula when he returns to a victim?

What I've come up with is a slight change in procedure by which Dracula visits his female victims. In the regular game, if Dracula has avoided being seen while entering his victim's home, he drinks her blood and then rolls to determine whether he was seen leaving. That last roll is not made immediately in the solitaire game.

Instead, the exit roll is made when Dracula returns for his second visit. If a one is rolled (indicating Dracula was seen the night before), an *ambush roll* (a new

wrinkle) is made. On a roll of 1-3, he is foiled because a loved one has tied a crucifix around the victim's neck! On a 4-6, all the hunters who have more than half their strength points remaining are waiting in the room in ambush and combat begins.

After that combat, the Credibility rating is increased by one to show that Dracula was seen leaving the house. This is the only change in the Credibility rating rules.

Note: There are no day moves for Dracula, or night moves for the hunters except in the ambush roll described above.

This brings us to the last major obstacle in solitaing *Undead*:

How can a solitaire game handle searching for Dracula's brides and getting cooperation when news reports are investigated?

The solution to this problem has two parts. First, if the hunters make their needed cooperation roll in checking out a news report concerning Dracula, not only can they search the coffins in that area, but they *also* get a +1 bonus on the very next recruiting roll. If a 10 was required before, only a nine will be necessary on the next roll.

When the brides of Dracula are involved, another procedure is used. In solitaire *Undead*, the brides may only act in areas surrounding the area in which they left human life and became brides.

If the hunters roll and act on a news report involving a bride, the same cooperation roll must be made. But if cooperation is gained, there is no recruiting bonus. Instead, the hunters, in addition to their other regular activities, may search two areas adjacent to the area in which the news event occurred.

If no bride is found (in other words, if only furniture counters, rather than coffins, turn up) there is a change of procedure on the next hunter turn. Instead of three location rolls, two of the searches must be in areas adjacent to the news report. Of course, if a coffin is turned up, all are exposed. If the bride is in that area, she is finished.

As with the Dracula counter, the bride counter is left face-up in the appropriate area. To make things even, when the hunters search for the bride in areas adjacent to the news events they followed up, they must start in the area most closely corresponding to 12 o'clock on a clock face; and they make their area searches in a clockwise direction.

For example, if the hunters get cooperation while investigating a news event on Fleet Street, the first of their two searches would have to be in Islington (closest to the 12 o'clock position). They would then proceed to Old Street, Cheapside, St. George, and the Strand, in that order, in following searches.

Exception: If one area has no inverted counters left, the hunters go to the next search area down the clock face. In the example above, if there was no inverted

counter in Islington or Old Street, the first search would be in Cheapside, followed by a search in St. George.

As in the regular game, unless a coffin is found, only one counter per area may be turned over in any one turn. Bride searches may only be conducted if cooperation is received.


A new bride, who begins in an area which has no inverted counters, starts from the nearest adjacent area that still has counters.

One other note: If Dracula conducts 15 searches and doesn't find the hunters, it is assumed they know of their danger and will move. All inverted hunter counters are taken off the map, reshuffled and rescattered around the map, one to an area.

This should take care of objections to

playing solitaire *Undead*. The solitaire game serves two purposes: Someone who loves the game can play when no one else is around, and second, it can be used as a teaching tool so an experienced player can show a new gamer how to play the Dracula side (the harder one to learn when starting out). Once new players get the hang of the game, they can move on to the regular two-player version.

Of course, this solitaire version does create a problem: SJ Games will have to change the catalog notation that *Undead*'s solitaire playability is "zero." This leaves only two games in the catalog with a "zero" solitaire potential: *Killer* and *Illuminati*. Now, it occurs to me they could be played solitaire as well. Of course, the gamer would have to be a controlled schizophrenic... **FE**



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The Thing in the Darkness Keeper's Notes

by Matthew Costello and Warren Spector



In FG 3, we ran *The Thing in the Darkness*, our first solo RPG scenario, and (brag, brag) the first ever solo for use with Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu*. If you made it all the way through *The Thing* and solved all the mysteries, congratulations. If you didn't, well, keep trying. If you're too lazy to keep trying (or you're just tired of dying . . . heh, heh, heh) read on; all the answers follow. What Lovecraftian horror was behind the mysterious disappearances that plagued Arkham?



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DEALER INQUIRIES INVITED

What were the evil ones after? Here we reveal all.

Of course, it was Cthonians who created all the problems in *The Thing*. There were many clues to this: the Cthonians are a burrowing race; they have a complex life-cycle stretching over a thousand years; they have tentacles; they communicate via telepathy; and they create earthquakes. If you survived long enough, each of these characteristics became apparent in *The Thing in the Darkness*.

The Cthonians inhabiting the environs of Aylesbury Hill have been there a long time. The hill's caverns and tunnels, some leading under Arkham to the local sewer system, have been a safe home for these loathsome creatures. But a desire has been growing among the Cthonians — a two-fold desire for conquest and change. These burrowers, with their thousand-year life cycle, have always been vulnerable — a young Cthorian is very small and needs protection for quite a long time before it can take care of itself. Human intruders would make short work of infant Cthonians.

The Cthonians of *The Thing* sought a way to accelerate the development of their young. A mad plan was devised; the Cthonians would merge with their human enemies. They would adopt humankind's laughingly brief growth period while retaining all that made the Cthonians the rulers of the underground kingdoms — they would mate with human women.

The girls who disappeared during the terrible days described in *The Thing in the Darkness* were not the first victims of the Cthonians. The experiment had been tried before, usually ending in bizarre failure. A few "successes" had, however, been achieved over the years. In fact, Helmut Walfe — director of the Arkham Historical Society — was one such "success." His mother was mated with a Cthorian and he was the first hybrid to survive.

The events described in *The Thing*

marked a resurgence of activity on the part of the Cthonians. Susan Hampshire and the other girls who disappeared were lured to the Cthonians' caverns by telepathy. Once lured to the caverns, the girls, in a state of blessed unawareness, received the living curse that was to develop and grow inside them; Cthorian seeds were hideously, blasphemously planted in human wombs. After conception, the girls were to have been released (though they would, of course, remain under the telepathic control of the Cthonians). After the months-long gestation period, the girls would return to the caverns beneath Arkham to deliver the newborn creatures — half-human, half-Cthorian, and capable of shape-shifting — creatures whose sole reason for being is to free the monsters from their 1000-year prison.

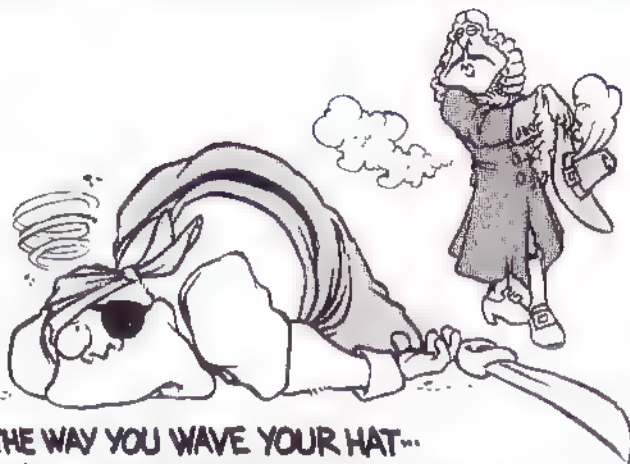
There are, to be sure, humans eager to serve the Cthonians and see the mad experiment come to fruition. Professor and Mrs. Beardsley helped to select the girls to be "blessed" with Cthorian young. The Beardsleys also had in their possession unusual crystals, given to them by the Cthonians. These crystals, found in the necks of several unfortunates in *The Thing in the Darkness*, were used to extend the range of the Cthorian's telepathic control; anyone cursed with such a crystal would find it impossible to resist the Cthonians' telepathic commands. Among those "crystalized" were Susan Hampshire, the first to be kidnapped that week, and John Cooper — guardian of the hill and a worshipper of his Cthorian masters.

B. Smith is not without allies in his battle against the Cthonians. Marcus Flagg (crazy as he is) has the goods on the Cthonians. He knows their plan and can offer Smith much valuable information. Father John offers holy items which may help keep B. Smith alive. Pretty slim pickings, but you have to take what help you can get in the world of *Call of Cthulhu*. In addition, the *Arkham Gazette* and the Public Library provide important (if easily overlooked) historical background. A shrewd investigator can find surprisingly useful clues in seemingly unimportant bits of historical trivia. Finally, the hardware store is a terrific place to buy dynamite, and if you don't have dynamite, you're in big trouble.

Smith's task was to interrupt the perverted wedding ceremony, during which the girls (all but Susan Hampshire, that is) were to be impregnated. In addition, Smith was charged with the dual responsibility of recovering all the crystals hidden in the Beardsley home and sealing off the two entrances to the Cthonians' caverns. If you didn't have dynamite, you just couldn't accomplish all that.

Ah, but what of Susan Hampshire, you ask? She returned to Arkham having already been impregnated. Even as you read this, her vile progeny may be plotting their revenge against . . . you.

FG



THE WAY YOU WAVE YOUR HAT...

In Yaquinto's **SWASHBUCKLER**, it is possible to be stunned longer if a hat is waved in your face than if you are hit with a beer mug, a thrown sword, a flipped table, a chair or are dropped from a height...
 (...Steve LaPrade)

OH, MY GOD....

In **RUNEQUEST** (Chaosium), anytime a character asks his god for divine intervention, there's a one per cent chance that the god will kill him on the spot... (...Karl Dishaw)



OKAY OKAY!
NEVER MIND!



CAN SMELL TH'
PLACE UP,
THOUGH.

MURPHY'S

RULES

SO WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

In **Advanced Melee** in **Metagaming's THE FANTASY TRIP**, the rules state "a dead figure can take no action of any kind"... (...Lawrence Person)

DRAGON? WHAT DRAGON?

In **Heritage Dwarfstar's DRAGON RAGE**, it is possible to suffer no harm whatsoever if a dragon falls from 200 feet and lands on you... (...Steve LaPrade)

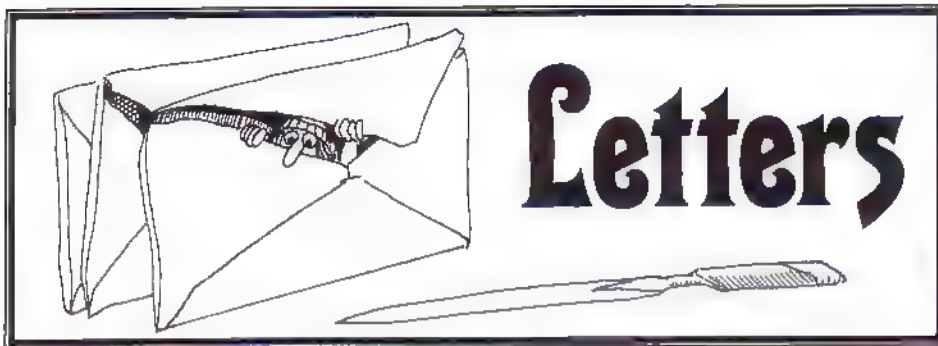


WOULDN'T WANT ANY BACKFIRE...

In **TSR's AD&D**, a fifth-level magic user can throw a 20-foot-radius fireball from as far away as 150 yards to as close as where he's standing...
 (...W.G. Armintrout)



BEN CARGENT...



Letters

... No Respect

Some time ago, SPI ran a series of questions which asked S&T readers to indicate the importance of various factors in their choice of games. The most important factors (I may have the order confused) were price, subject, and company's reputation. The reputation of the designer was the fourteenth most important factor of sixteen possibilities.

This has always confused and annoyed me, since I am a designer, and am more likely to be favorably treated by the companies I deal with if my name carries some weight. When I buy a book, I do not look to see if it is published by Doubleday or Simon & Schuster; I look to see if it is written by Robert Heinlein or Fred Glug. It is, after all, the author who is responsible for a book, and I am more likely to find a book I enjoy by looking for an author I know to be good than by picking up something by an unknown.

Somehow, gamers do not think along these lines. They look for the new Avalon Hill, or GDW, or Chaosium game — not for the new Jackson, Goldberg, or Miller. To an extent, this makes sense. Even today, most designers work exclusively for one company, and by looking for (as an example) the next GDW, one is likely to find the new Miller or the new Chadwick, so the GDW logo is a pretty good guide to quality. But this is changing. Companies are increasingly looking to outside designers, and the era in which every company had an in-house staff modeled on SPI's is ending. A gamer who wants some guarantee of quality should remember to look for the designer's name.

The designer is, after all, the man who is preeminently the author of the game; he analyzes the situation and develops the game system; he writes the rules. The company may redo the rules (but in my experience, companies which rewrite the rules of outside designers botch the job more often than not), and is certainly responsible for the graphics. Yet it is not the contribution of the company, I think, which produces the game elements which players find most important: the flow of play, the "feel" of the game, the accuracy of research or appropriateness of game systems, the elegance of design, the clarity and completeness of rules. These are the designer's contributions.

The simple fact is that most companies are afraid of designers. They strive mightily to give designers minimal credit and minimal pay. Avalon Hill has never published the name of any designer on any of its game boxes, and has agreed to publish designers' names at the end of game rules only under severe pressure. TSR never publishes the names of designers on its rule covers or boxes, the only exception being the Great God Gyax. Designers' names will not be found on the covers of GDW, Metagaming, or Yaquinto games. About the only company of any size which gives the designers that credit is Chaosium.

Game publishers do not want consumers to

readily identify designers. They would much prefer them to buy games on the basis of publisher identification. If consumers started to buy games on the basis of the designer's reputation then, God forbid, companies might have to pay designers enough money to pay the rent with.

If I sound bitter, I hope you will forgive me. I have not suffered too badly under the current system; with the exception of one game from Metagaming, my name has appeared on the covers of all my games, and the fact that I write frequently for various gaming magazines and have won several awards means that my name is moderately well known among the gaming public. What perturbs me is that many — if not most — of the best game designers have literally no recognition among game buyers.

In short, at the risk of sounding self-serving, I must say that designers get a raw deal. They get neither the money nor the recognition they deserve. This will change only when consumers begin to realize that the designer's contribution to a game vastly outweighs all other factors in determining the game's quality. If this occurs, companies will be forced to pay more attention to the needs of designers; until it does, game design will continue to be an occupation that only those who love it enough to accept a lower living standard than could be commanded in another field can afford to pursue.

Greg Costikyan
New York, NY

Praise, Pick, and Suggest

It's been several years since I have involved myself in any role-playing game, looted a dungeon or "ruled" most of Cimmeria as an Amazon/warrior/thief (came from playing "young adults" who didn't think a grandmother of 50+ had ever read Conan). I maintain a contact with gaming through my eldest son, however. He brought my attention to your article "A Gamer's Guide to Victorian London," thinking perhaps some of the historical information you included might be of help to me in my revisions of my current historical novel. Of most value, of course, was your "Recommended Reading." I've read, if I don't have, most of your list. However, there were several that I appreciate hearing about. My thanks.

I thoroughly enjoyed your bare-bones introduction to the era, locations, characters, and in particular, your sense of humor. It has prompted me to suggest you might enjoy (if you haven't already read) *Tarzan Alive* by Philip Jose Farmer. It was one of the few books that I found myself giggling throughout, and in some cases laughed aloud. It was a delight to find that Lord Greystoke's genealogy included not only Sherlock, Mycroft and Sigrid, but Professor Challenger, Raffles, Sir Percy Blakely, Lord Peter, a French-Canadian harpooner called Nathaniel Land, and a number of other rather "familiar" people.

I also enjoyed *The Sherlock Holmes Con-*

sulting *Detective Game*. I finally worked myself up to only two steps behind Holmes by the last case.

Once again, thank you for a delightful premise and read.

Pauline McGregor Johnson
Los Altos, CA

I usually don't read *Fantasy Gamer*, but the article in the most recent issue intrigued me... the one on Victorian London, a particularly favorite era of mine. The article was excellent — well-written, not overly gushing (as some of its ilk are), and quite informative, given the scope. A few comments

The Jack the Ripper info was nice, but too much time and credence was given to the theory espoused in the recent movie, *Murder By Decree*. A theory which is little thought of by Ripperologists, by the way. Well, since everybody is guessing on this subject, who cares anyway?

I am, however, an ardent Savoyard (or Gilbert & Sullivan aficionado), and I perform G&S regularly with Winchester Light Opera. Therefore, in the vein of all those who plague publishers and designers with nit-picking trivia, I offer the following

1) *Patience* did not open at the Savoy Opera but at the Opera Comique. It switched to the newly built Savoy on October 10, 1881, thus becoming the first show to be lit by electricity. (This greatly enhanced theater in general, as it allowed the audience lights to be lowered to darkness, thus focusing greater attention on the stage.)

2) The 1884 G&S production was titled *Princess Ida*, not *Ida*.

3) In 1893, *Utopia Unlimited* premiered at the Savoy. This seems to be overlooked by Mr. Barton. And what happened to *Ruddigore* (1887), a major G&S production?

I also commend you, Mr. Barton, and your readers interested in this era to the marvelous Sherlock Holmes pastiche, *The West End Horror*, by Nicholas Meyer (I think), in which the eminent detective meets Gilbert & Sullivan, Bram Stoker, and G.B. Shaw, and a whole host of Victorian characters in what reads like a formula for an adventure of just the type you are describing.

Richard Berg
Flushing, NY

I liked William Barton's "Gamer's Guide to Victorian London" in *FG* 2. (Getting a lot of mileage out of that *Undead* map, aren't you, guys?) Features like this have interest beyond immediate gaming purposes; how about similar ones on ancient Rome, or Baghdad, or Nazi Berlin?

Please ask Mr. Barton to design an *FG* adventure featuring Queen Victoria, Sherlock Holmes, Moriarty, Jack the Ripper, Dracula, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Fu Manchu, the Invisible Man, the Time Traveller, and — of course — Mary Poppins. Any time in the next couple of issues will be fine.

Allen Varney
Cupertino, CA

Sure, Allen, anything you want; we'll get him on it right away. Aaron Allston is working on a previously promised "Guide to Gaming the World of Jules Verne." But it's going to run in *Space Gamer*, so you'd better make sure you're subscribing to both mags.

And think... we went to all that trouble and spent all that money on a different map and we still get jumped on.

CF

Blood On My Typewriter

by Christopher Frink



I'm sick of this. We've been slaving away to get caught up for a while. I — being less than thrilled with the idea of slavery — keep trying to go home, so, they've kept me chained to my desk going on four days now. The shackle's worked a nifty band of pain into my ankle, but at least the chain reaches to the bathroom. Everybody in the office knows exactly how far that chain reaches — I've worn a circle in the carpet around my desk. If anyone wants to give me a note, or food, or anything, it gets left just outside the circle. I guess people got nervous when I mauled that delivery man; nobody gets very close to me these days. Steve tells me the sooner I finish this column, the sooner he'll toss me the key to this accursed lock, so on with it:

The biggest news this month is the return of Finieous Fingers. It's been well over a year since the larcenous little devil last appeared in the now-defunct *Adventure Gaming* magazine. Well, not only does Finieous live — he lives in the pages of *Fantasy Gamer*!

The creator of Finieous Fingers — J.D. Webster — got in touch with us from East Nowhere, Philippines, where he's a jet pilot for the Navy (ours). After months of confusing cross-Pacific telephone communication, J.D. and SJG came together — watch out, Hobbits! Starting in *FG* 5 (with a little help from the trans-oceanic mails), each issue of *Fantasy Gamer* will feature a full-page, full-color installment of the misadventures of Charly, Fred, Grond, Bored-Flak, and the rest of Finieous' comic compatriots. So tell all your friends, neighbors, and game store owners that Finieous lives in *Fantasy Gamer*!



And speaking of Finieous, some of the characters you see scattered throughout this issue are courtesy of Letters (834 Chalmers Place, Suite 444, Chicago, IL 60614). They were kind enough to send us a mess of Finieous rubber stamps when they found out we'd resurrected everyone's favorite thief. (Mention that you heard it here, and Letters will give you a dollar off their catalog.)

On other fronts, Steve just reminded me to mention his *Great Unnamed Role-Playing System*. I let him slide up close enough so I could take a lunge at him — a daring leap for the key and freedom —

only to have the chain jerk me back. Steve's laughing, my leg hurts, and I need to tell you about *GURPS*. He's heavily into playtesting and plans to give you a progress report in *FG* 5.

Let's see, what else do I have to do before I can convince my keepers that I'm finished and ready to be loosed upon an unsuspecting world? I need to mention that this column's title was the first submission in my Name-That-Column Contest, begun last issue. "Blood On My Typewriter" was suggested by our Art Director, Pat Mueller. She gets two free issues of *Fantasy Gamer*. If this smacks of favoritism, well, I still hope to get some entries from you all — this issue of *FG* is going to press early, so there hasn't been much time for entries to get in. If I get some other *good* titles, I'll go with 'em. Maybe I could use a new title for

every column? I don't know, I've gotten attached to "Blood On My Typewriter."

But, then, I'd gotten attached to the idea of *FG* growing and growing; I even promised you that this issue would be a 60-pager. Boy, was I wrong. I didn't figure in such variables as the annual post-holiday advertising slump. The bottom line is we're only 44 pages this time around. Sorry we couldn't give you more. As the months go by, advertising grows, and the more ads we have, the more articles we can get to you.

Now I'm done. Steve tossed me the keys and got out of the building as I fumbled with the lock. My co-workers left a little food to slow me down, so by the time I got loose and ate, everybody was gone. Nothing left to do but go home and rest up — we've got another magazine to get out.

FG

COMING ATTRactions

Fantasy Gamer

In Issue 5 (April/May 1984):
FINIEOUS FINGERS RETURNS!

A feature review of *Kabal*, a complete and very complex role-playing game.

A review of *Witch Hunt* — an RPG in which, whether witch or magistrate, only the clever survive;

The Windigo — a new RPG class;

Plus all of our regular columns, capsule reviews, and Murphy's Rules.

Space Gamer

In Issue 68 (March/April 1984):

Island of Entellope — a generic adventure set in a post-holocaust world.

Featured reviews of *Bug-Eyed Monsters*, from Greg Costikyan and West End Games; and

Nuclear Escalation — latest nuclear tensions exploited, from Blade/Flying Buffalo.

"Icepick" — a new *Ogre* scenario and short story.

Autoduel Quarterly

In Issue 5 (Spring 2034):

The Green Circle Blues — can you save Seattle? A programmed solo adventure;

"Effie" — making housecalls is complicated

in 2034. Action-packed autodueling fiction;

The AADA: Here and Now — It's here! It's real! You can join!



Capsule Reviews



Fantasy Gamer reviews fantasy boardgames, role-playing games, computer games, play-by-mail games, and game supplements. We will review any SI game if the publisher sends us a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical games.

The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Games and game items for which *Fantasy Gamer* is seeking reviews include *Adventures from the Abyss*, *Alluring Alcoves*, *Aztec*, *Bavention*, *Book of Treasure Maps III*, *Brotherhood of the Bolt*, *Chilling Chambers*, *City of the Sacred Flame*, *City of Sorcerers*, *Complete Alchemist*, *Complete Spell Caster*, *Corsairs of Tallibar*, *Crypt of Medea*, *Curse of Zanathan*, *Death House*, *Death on the Docks*, *Demon Pit of Caeldo*, *Demons of Dundurn*, *Revised Expert D&D Rule Set*, *The DM's Book of Nasty Tricks*, *Druids of Doom*, *Dungeon Maps*, *The Egyptian Trilogy*, *Evil Ruins*, *Gamemaster*, *Gateway to*

Tekumel, *Gem and the Staff*, *Ghoulash*, *RAFM Gilla-worms*, *Haven: Secrets of the Labyrinth*, *Heart of Oak*, *Heroes and Villains*, *Horror on the Hill*, *Jasmine: Battle for the Mid-Realm*, *Kamakura*, *The Keep*, *The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror*, *Manifest Destiny*, *Mines of Keridav*, *Monster Squash*, *Necromancer* (computer game), *Northern Mirkwood*, *Northwest Frontier*, *The Palladium Roleplaying Game*, *Pirates Hagrost*, *Plague of Terror*, *Questers*, *Question of Gravity*, *Ravenloft*, *Ravensgate*, *Runes*, *Search for the Lost City*, *The Serpent Islands*, *Shadowland*, *Shield Maidens of Sea Rune*, *Shipwrecker*, *Society of Sorcery*, *Streets of Gems*, *Superior Models Dragon* releases, *Swordthrust*, *Tarantis*, *The Tarot Quest*, *Thieves Guild 8*, *Toxins*, *Village of Peddler's Ferry*, *Witches Court Marshes*, *Wizardry III*, *Wizards & Lizards* new releases, *Wondrous Weapons*, *The World of Silverdawn*, *Ysgarth Adventure Pack #1*, *Ysgarth Adventure Pack #2*, *Ysgarth Player & GM Sheets*.

Games and game items for which *Fantasy Gamer* has assigned and received reviews

include *Adventures & 3 Worlds* miniatures, *Angraelmar: The Court of Kings*, *Archon*, *Ascent to Hell*, *Battlemats*, *Broadsides*, *Brotherhood of the Bolt*, revised *Bushido*, *Cards of Power*, revised *Chivalry & Sorcery*, *Complete Dungeon of the Bear*, *Cthulhu Companion*, *Dark Crystal* miniatures, *Dark Cults*, *Death in Dunwich*, *Death to Setanta*, *Dicing with Dragons*, *Dragon Lord* miniatures, *Dungeon Floor Plans*, *Dungeon Floors*, *Dungeonland*, *Endless Plans*, *Endless Quests*, *Excalibur*, *Gamescience Polyhedra*, *The Glastonbury Labyrinth*, *Goblin*, *The Great Owl*, *Hero*, *Kingdom of the Sidhe*, *Knights of Chaos*, *Maze of the Riddling Minotaur*, *Middle Passage*, *Newgrange Reactivated*, *Quest of the Great Jewels*, *Realms of Sword & Thunder*, *Runequest* (3rd edition), *Stalking the Night Fantastic*, *Stormbringer Companion*, *The Sunken Lands*, *Swordbearer*, *Sword Play!* miniatures, *Sylvan Settings*, *Talisman*, *Through Dungeons Deep*, *Tome of the Mighty Magic*, *Velgar*, *Warhammer*, *War of the Worlds*, *Wire of the Moon*, *Witch Hunt*.

Games

THE CITY STATES OF ARKLYRELL (Task Force Games); \$4.95. Designed by Michael B. Joslyn. Zip-lock bag, one 16-page 5½" x 8½" rulebook, 54 die-cut counters, one 22" x 17" map. Two to four players, playing time, one to two hours. Published 1983.

In *The City States of Arklyrell*, each player attempts to conquer the world of Arklyrell by capturing a specific number of citadels (depending on the number of players), or by being the player with the most citadels at the end of 25 turns. Each player starts with one leader (two in the two-player game) who must gather his forces and magical items. There are many different types of units, including leaders, city men, barbarians, nomads, berserkers, ships, rocs, and ice worms (!?). Each unit has an attack strength, a movement factor, and a morale factor. A turn consists of movement, recruitment, and combat. Combat is resolved by differential, with adverse results possible.

The game has many strong points. A player is constantly faced with difficult decisions. Each player must choose his battles carefully because a bad die roll may cause his forces to desert. Often, combat is unnecessary, a player may win the game simply by recruiting the occupants of the requisite number of citadels, without resorting to combat. (That is, if the other players let him!) Since the set-up is fixed, the first few turns tend to be the same, but after that, no two games are alike. One especially nice point is that the game really is for two, three or four players, not just two or four.

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There are only a few problems with the game, many of which are simply cosmetic. The map is somewhat garish, it is difficult to distinguish between barbarians and nomads, and the counters are identified by number rather than by unit type. The counters are all the same color, so it is easy to forget to move your units, as they look like everyone else's. Perhaps the worst problem is that the leader units are unbalanced, but this can be rectified by good strategy.

Overall, *CSA* is a very good game and gives players a variety of options. Although it is not overly original or realistic, it works well and is fun to play. *The City States of Arklyrell* is fairly simple, and experienced players will find it a nice break from more complex, involved games.

— Jacob Ossar

Supplements

BIG RUBBLE (Chaosium, Inc.); \$17.98. Designed by Greg Stafford, Steve Perrin and others. Three 8½" x 11" books: 16-page Player's Guide, 32-page Game Master's Guide, 96-page Episodes Book. One 11" x 17" map with illustrations. Playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

Big Rubble is an 'episodic' *RuneQuest* campaign set in the ruins of Old Pavis, an extensive abandoned city inhabited by all manner of strange creatures and filled with rare treasures. *Big Rubble* consists of two major books: One provides background for the GM; the other is filled with scenarios and a large selection of play aids, ranging from various official documents to a bribery table to a complete map of *Big Rubble* (Old Pavis). All of this comes in a

nice box and is attractively laid out and illustrated.

It meets the admirable production standards of previous *RuneQuest* products. There is a lot of nice background material provided and there are seven major adventure scenarios included, with the potential and background to create as many more as the players can endure. A lengthy series of interactions and encounters could easily be created from the clearly presented body of information included in the books.

The most notable characteristic about *Big Rubble* is its thoroughness, and the impressive amount of detail which is provided. It is hard to find fault with the material given, all of which is consistent and well thought out. Perhaps the use of random encounter tables is a bit arbitrary and discourages inventiveness on the part of the GM, but otherwise, it is hard to fault any specifics of this nice, complete game aid.

There is fault in the ideas behind the package, or rather with the lack of new ideas in *Big Rubble*. Glorantha tends to be a rather static world, especially as presented in most of the major *RuneQuest* aids, and while it is strong on background, it tends to be rather weak on real excitement and innovative situations. Nowhere is this weakness more evident than in *Big Rubble*, where the situations and adventures are the same passive, unchallenging material. The background is a ruined city, but the basic situations are the same as you could find anywhere in Pavis or elsewhere in Glorantha, and there are no really new ideas. In *Big Rubble* a potentially interesting subject is made mundane.

Big Rubble is a dead city, but does that mean it has to be lifeless? Without some new ideas to hold the player's attention or at least some situational, plot or character innovations, it becomes hard for any but the best GMs to make an adventure exciting no matter how much fascinating background material and in-

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formation is provided. The same old stuff in a new background isn't really much more than some marginally interesting trivia.

David F. Nalle

PURSUIT TO KADATH. (Theatre of the Mind Enterprises, Inc.); \$10.00. Original story by Bob Gallagher. Additional material by John Diaper, Lawrence Flournoy, Steve Rawling, and Ed Wimble. One 8 1/2" x 11" 76-page scenario booklet for use with *Call of Cthulhu*. Indefinite playing time. Published 1983.

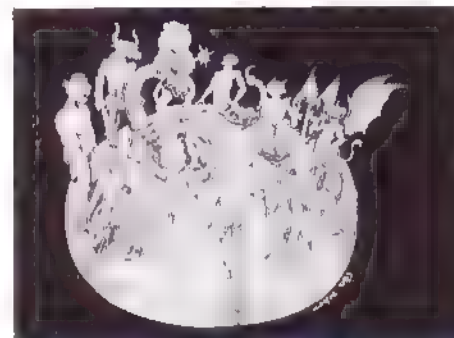
Pursuit to Kadath, the second Theatre of the Mind Enterprises release for *Call of Cthulhu*, is little short of a revelation. All those with any interest in things Lovecraftian, whether they play *Call of Cthulhu* or not, should have a copy on their shelves. The basic story involves the fate of Nils Lindstrom, a student at Miskatonic University who, through a variety of unfortunate circumstances, is possessed by Kingu, a servitor of Yig — the Great Old One, the Father of Serpents.

The first section of the rules is for the Keeper only, and describes events surrounding the possession of Nils Lindstrom, and his subsequent (nefarious) activities. Curiously, much of the information presented herein involves events which take place before the player characters make their appearance on the scene.

One of the great joys of *Pursuit to Kadath* is that it isn't just a shoot-em-up, but a real test of wits. The players must really keep on their toes — they must think and act like investigators — if they are to figure out what's been going on. The way in which the Keeper doles out information is, then, absolutely crucial. The first sections of the *Pursuit to Kadath* booklet include ample hints about offering and withholding

information. These come in the form of Notes to the Keeper, scattered throughout the text. Other game companies would do well to adopt this approach.

Later sections of the booklet describe the way in which player characters can be drawn into an investigation which will take them from Arkham, Massachusetts, to New York City and on to Turkey! In the course of their investigations, the players learn of possessions, bank robberies, brutal murders, shipwrecks, and hideous human sacrifices: in short, everything one



Interior illustration from *Pursuit to Kadath*

could desire in a *Call of Cthulhu* adventure. There is certainly no lack of action in this particular test of wits!

To this point, however, nothing I've mentioned is too terribly extraordinary. What sets *Pursuit to Kadath* apart from other pre-programmed adventure modules is the background material provided: There's a detailed discussion of hypnosis and what people believed about it 60-odd years ago; lists of New York hotels and

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several potential sources of information (all with addresses) are included, you'll find several facsimile police reports, bills, railroad schedules, and newspaper clippings; and TOME has seen fit to include several superb maps. You'll find maps and detailed discussions of Turkey and surrounding areas (circa 1923), as well as a world map detailing standard travel routes of that period. Amazing. For those who've always wondered what Miskatonic University looked like, TOME has even included a map of the campus.

And speaking of Miskatonic U. . . Have you ever lusted after a school catalogue? Ever wonder what the degree requirements were? What classes were offered, who taught them, and when? It's all here in the pages of *Pursuit to Kadath*.

The problems *Pursuit to Kadath* has all fall under the heading minor. The artwork could be better (though it shows marked improvement over that in *The Arkham Evil*), and I suspect inexperienced Keepers might have trouble keeping the timing of events straight in their

own minds, let alone the minds of players. Finally, it's a little expensive, at \$10.00 a pop. And that's about it.

Pursuit to Kadath gets an almost-unqualified rave. TOME has offered so much background information you don't even have to play *Pursuit to Kadath* to get your money's worth — you can just incorporate all the background information into your own campaign. And they've even included a second — albeit brief — scenario in the back of the book. You just can't ask for much more in an RPG module.

— Warren Spector

Miniatures

DARK HORSE MINIATURES (Dark Horse). \$1.00 to \$3.75. 25mm metal fantasy miniatures. Sculpted by Ian Lungold. Released 1983.

New miniatures companies appear constantly — and often vanish again, unnoticed. What-

ever the final fate of Dark Horse may be, I'll say one thing — it *won't* go unnoticed. This new company has combined skill in production with humor and flair in promotion. It deserves to succeed.

Over 40 figures are now available in five lines: Orcs, Adventurers, Barbaric Elves, Unholy Warriors, and Monstrosities. Casting quality is good; there is very little flash. Ian Lungold's sculpture is excellent and detailed. Some of the individual figures are uninspired (the hobbits, for instance, are as boring as I expect a real hobbit would be). But others are quite original! The Swamp Demon and the Master Thaumaturgist belong in any serious collection. A few of the figures are just plain *wet* — the Orc Seductress baring her loathsome charms, and the baby dragon cutely chewing on its own tail, head this list.

One thing that sets this line apart from some others is extra weapons or accessories (in a couple of cases, pet animals!) cast on the same tree as the figure itself. This gives the buyer variety, but keeps cost down. And *hubris* though it may be, Dark Horse has already started its own newsletter; it's called *Dark Times*, and it mixes company plugs with silliness in a way the hobby hasn't seen since the old Martian Metals upside-down ads. *Dark Times* is free to regular Dark Horse mail-order customers.

This is the paragraph where a reviewer is supposed to talk about problems. Any problems with this line are purely a matter of taste . . . or painting. Because of the fine detail, many of these figures don't look their best until they are painted — and a bad paint job destroys them. Withal, they are easier to paint than some I've seen elsewhere.

In sum: If your hobby shop doesn't carry this line, you should probably write Dark Horse and ask for their catalog (Or, if you believe *Dark Times*, "reprimand them severely and tell them you'll think twice before buying from a slipshod operation . . .") I told you these fellows were a bit *odd*. But they make some pretty miniatures.

Steve Jackson

Publications

THE ARMORY'S BUYERS GUIDE TO FANTASY MINIATURES (The Armory); \$7.95. Edited by Richard Day and Bruce Casick. Illustrated by Greg Barrett. 8½" x 11" softcover, 200 pages. Published 1983.

If you have ever wanted a comprehensive listing of who makes what in the world of fantasy and science fiction miniatures, the new buyers guide from the Armory is just what the doctor prescribed. This new guide does what no single catalog can do; it illustrates over 2000 figures available from over 20 firms. The predominant figures are 25mm and 15mm, but some 54mm figures are thrown in for the collector or diorama builder.

The guide consists of three parts. Section I lists the figures by class such as Assassins, Bards, Paladins, etc. Section II lists the figures by the companies who make them, and (with very few exceptions) has an illustration of each figure or set of figures. The Ral Partha listing alone has 19 pages, and even includes their recent Summer '83 releases. Section III lists stores which carry the Armory's products, and probably have in stock the figures in the guide.

The only drawback with this guide is that it only covers figures from companies that are distributed by the Armory. This is a minor draw-

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This wondrous collection of rules and robbery is available by mail for the special price of only \$10.00 — **order now**, this offer expires June 31, 1984!

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back since, with the exception of Superior's Wizards and Lizards line, the Armory distributes just about every important miniatures firm.

The drawings by Greg Barrett are good representations of the figures they are supposed to represent, and will give the buyer an idea of what the figure looks like and how it is posed and equipped. Of course the finer details are not readily apparent, but this is a problem even in photographs, so the guide at least gives one an idea what one can expect a Citadel Paladin in full plate armor to look like.

The *Armory's Buyers Guide* is probably more useful for the serious collector than for the average gamer who only owns a handful of figures. The guide is also quite handy for store owners who might wish to show their customers what is available from the different manufacturers. With the miniatures market growing the way it has been, this guide will soon be out of date, but for the meantime it is the most complete listing of miniature figures that exists. I was completely satisfied with my copy, and I am sure any serious collector will also be satisfied.

—Edwin J. Rotondaro

WEAPONS AND ASSASSINS (Palladium Books), \$4.95. Written by Erick Wujcik. Soft-bound, 7" x 10", 52-page booklet. Reference manual for adding authentic assassin orders and weaponry to a role-playing game. Published 1983.

Weapons and Assassins is a sourcebook for those gamemasters who are searching for realistic assassin orders, as well as the tricks of the trade. It concerns itself mainly with the three major "known" assassin orders (leaving out modern-day terrorist and crime syndicate orders), but describes them in great detail. The

orders which are dealt with include the Ninja of Japan (extensive weapon/gimmick lists and tactics used by these elusive people), the Order of Assassins of the Middle East (spice for any Arabic campaign), and the Thugs of India (not to be confused with the term "thug" as it is used today).

The booklet is very well written and researched; Wujcik appears to have done his homework. By far the best section deals with the Ninja and the tools of their trade. Here, the GM will find a compendium of material ranging from the clothing they wore, and the poisons they commonly (or not so commonly) used, to the devices they employed to gain access to their intended victims. The information given is strictly historical and does not give the assassins "magical" powers, though it is easy to see how common people could imagine them as being devils or spirits. There is even a bibliography included so that further reading can be done. (Further reading isn't really necessary for those GMs simply wishing to use one or more of these orders in a campaign, however, as all major details are given in the book).

Personally, I think *Weapons and Assassins* is great, though I have friends who disagree. The only fault I can see (if you could call it that) is the fact that it includes only three orders and no others.

Overall, *Weapons and Assassins* is an excellent source of assassin material. It fits nicely into any game system as there is no mention of "characteristics" and no attempts are made to describe these orders in game terms. Those who would like to have a good working knowledge of Thugs, Order of Assassins, or Ninja could do a lot worse than pick up this book. A good investment.

Jerry Epperson



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THE VILLAGE IDIOT



Nova to Publish Dragonriders Book Game

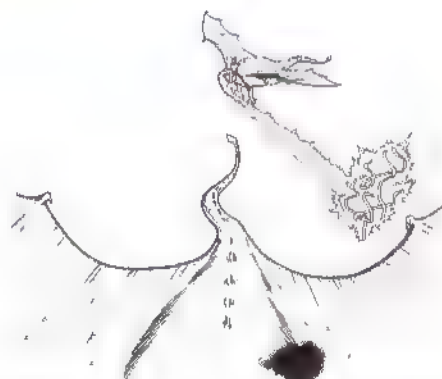
Nova Games, publisher of the *Ace of Aces* and *Lost Worlds* picture-book game systems, has announced plans to put out a *Dragonriders of Pern* game this spring.

The game, based on the popular series of novels by Anne McCaffrey, will use the same system of movement as *Ace of Aces*, said Nova Games President Jim Rosinus. "In addition to seeing your dragon, you will also see Thread," Rosinus said. "The object is to burn more Thread than the opponent." There is an element of coop

eration in *Dragonriders* that doesn't exist in *AoA*, Rosinus said, because the players cannot attack each other. The players will also lose points if they allow any Thread to reach the ground.

Like *AoA*, *Dragonriders* will have rules for a basic, intermediate and advanced game. The advanced game is a campaign game where the players earn "prestige points" based on how effectively they combat Thread.

The game will be packaged similarly to



Preliminary artwork from Nova's upcoming *Dragonriders of Pern* picture-book game.

Ace of Aces, and a tentative retail price of \$14.95 has been set. Nova hopes to have the game out by April or early May.

News Briefs

Ritchie Leaves TSR for Coleco

Dave Ritchie, a former SPI game designer, has left TSR to join Coleco's Advanced Research and Development department. Ritchie was the last SPI holdover in Lake Geneva; his last position at TSR was Product Manager.

Ritchie's new position involves design work for computer and video games for Coleco's Colecovision and Adam machines. Ritchie said he was glad to get back to design work. "Managing for TSR was something of a trial," he said. "Designing is much more relaxing."

Ritchie's wife, Debbie, also a former TSR employee, will be joining Coleco as a creative writer in the Education department.

Ritchie's design credits include *DragonQuest* for SPI, and several other games.

Flying Buffalo's *Tunnels & Trolls* role-playing game. Future editions of the programs will be properly credited. Currently, the *Maces & Magic* line consists of three games: *Stone of Sisyphus*, *Balrog* and *Morton's Fork*.

St. Andre Starts T&T Fanzine

Ken St. Andre, designer of *Tunnels & Trolls*, has announced the publication of a fanzine devoted to the role-playing game. The fanzine will be called *TnT* and will be published every other month. St. Andre is depending on reader contributions of art, fiction, humor, advanced rules and scenarios. The first issue was due out in January, and costs \$1. Ken St. Andre can be reached at 3421 E. Yale, Phoenix, AZ 85008.

New and Upcoming

Coleco To Produce *Dragon's Lair*

Coleco Industries has purchased home rights to the popular coin-operated laser-disk game *Dragon's Lair*. Coleco plans to have the game ready by mid-1984, along with the hardware required to make it work. The reported price for the rights was \$2 million.



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T&T To Get Computer Credit

Adventure International, Chameleon Software and Flying Buffalo, Inc. recently announced that a settlement had been reached over an inadvertent copyright violation. The *Maces & Magic* series of computer programs, written by Chameleon Software and distributed by Adventure International, contains material from

Convention Calendar

- *March 9-11: COASTCON '84. SF and gaming con. SJ is Gaming Guest of Honor. Contact CoastCon '84, P.O. Box 1423, Biloxi, MS 39533.
- March 16-18: LUNACON '84. SF con. Contact LUNACON '84, P.O. Box 779, Brooklyn, NY 11230.
- March 16-18: TRI-CON II. SF and gaming con. Contact North Carolina State Gaming Society, P.O. Box 37122, Raleigh, NC 27627.
- *March 16-18: ORCCON 1984. Southern California's largest strategy game convention and exposition. Contact STRATEGICON PR Dept., P.O. Box 2577, Anaheim, CA 92804.
- March 16-18: SIMCON VI. Gaming con including Army training games, 1000+ miniatures battles, role-playing and films. Contact Simcon VI, P.O. Box 29142, River Station, Rochester, NY 14627.
- March 17-18: CENTCON 84. Gaming con. Contact Chairman Ronald E. Vincent, 471 Commonwealth Ave., New Britain, CT 06053.
- March 22-25: NORWESCON 7. Science fiction con. Contact Norwescon 7, P.O. Box 24207, Seattle, WA 98124.
- *March 29-April 1: AGGIECON XV. SF con. Contact AggieCon XV, P.O. Box J-1, College Station, TX 77844.
- April 6-8: CAPCON 84. Boardgaming, miniature, role-playing con. Contact Paul Riegel, 6119 E. Main St. #202, Columbus, OH 43213.
- April 6-8: NORTHEASTER 2. Gaming convention. Contact NorthEaster 2, Box 101, R.C. Student Center, 126 College Ave., New Brunswick, NJ 08903.
- April 6-8: MASSCONFUSION. Also called Technicon, this SF-Gaming con features tournaments in 32 different games. Contact Ego-Trip Enterprises, 587-C Park Ave., Worcester, MA 01603.
- April 13-15: CAPROCK. SF con. Contact Capcon '84, 302 E. Purdue No. 29, Lubbock, TX 79403.
- April 28-29: GAME FAIRE '84. Gaming, miniatures, chess con. Contact Shannon Ahern, Book and Game Company, West 621 Mallon, Spokane, WA 99201, (509) 325-3358.
- May 4-6: NIAGARA GAMEFEST AND COMPUTER SHOW '84. Gaming, computer con. Contact NGA, 223 St. Paul St., St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada L2R 6V9.
- May 4-6: ONOCON '84. SF, gaming, fantasy con. Send SASE to Onocon '84, P.O. Box 305, Syracuse, NY 13208.
- May 4-6: VIKINGCON V. Science fiction and gaming con. Contact Vikingcon V, Science Fiction and Fantasy Club, VU 402, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA 98225.
- *May 11-13: DREAMCON 1984. SF, movies, gaming con. Contact Dreamcon 1984, c/o Mark F. Fischner, P.O. Box 21, Porter, TX 77365.
- May 27: MIGS V. Free gamefest, gaming con. Contact Chris Goldsmith, 100 Lorraine Dr., Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8T 3S3.
- *June 1-3: CON-JURATION I. SF and gaming con. Contact CON-JURATION, P.O. Box 690064, Tulsa, OK 74169.
- June 7-10: HOUSTON CON '84. SF con. Contact Houston Con '84, 11333 Chimney Rock, Houston, TX 77035.
- June 21-24: DEEPSOUTHCON. SF and gaming con. Contact Chattanooga DeepSouthCon, c/o Irvin Koch, 835 Chattanooga Bk. Bldg., Chattanooga, TN 37402.

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PBM Update

Keeping Posted

PBM Update reports on professionally-moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month for the issue in which the notice is to appear. All copy should be typed and double-spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. FG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.

Welcome to "Keeping Posted," our new regular PBM column. "Keeping Posted" isn't a normal column — one staffer won't be writing it every issue. It's open to anybody who's interested in PBM and can coherently express themselves. Even if you hate play-by-mail there's room for your opinion too!

Beginning next issue, "Keeping Posted" will feature strategy articles and reviews of PBM games. For now, on with PBM Update:

Schubel & Son

Company News: We are pleased to announce after four long years our third world of *The Tribes of Crane*, Crane III, which will offer new or inexperienced players the chance to enter new and unconquered worlds without old established empires or alliances. In addition, several changes were made to Crane III to improve the game system.

The Tribes of Crane

Crane I: The First Empire's capital city of Fax was recently blockaded by the navy of renegade Moonfish People. The Moonfish had traded in Fax for many months and had sworn loyalty to the First Empire but they were apparently loyal to the evil Blood Trust and acting to isolate the city in preparation for an upcoming siege. The city warriors of Fax responded to the blockade by attacking the Moonfish but

were repulsed with heavy casualties. First Empire war fleets are expected to converge on the area to destroy the Moonfish and attempt to intercept the invasion fleet's transports.

Crane II: At the city of Zadar, the Dark Union city leader, Caravan Merchant Shaman Ravage, recently launched a bloody purge of the city leadership to eliminate all possible enemies and their allies. He and his allies destroyed the infamous Summers People, veterans of the original siege of Zadar, and several other enemy tribes. In addition, Ravage arrested and executed Wandering Shaman Al-Ka, War Shaman Arioeh, and City Councilman Spear. Only Sea Shaman Barabbas, the original commander of the armies that had captured Zadar several years before, escaped. Barabbas has powerful allies and unless he is eliminated soon, he will seriously threaten Ravage's dominance of the city.

The Round Table

World of Angrelmar

Angrelmar is a pseudo-medieval world using imaginary geography and personalities but comparable in concept to ninth century Europe. Players operate noble families, competing churches or barbaric kingdoms with the goal of surviving generations of history. Each turn is a year of game time. Over 10 years of Angrelmar have been played to date and there are now over 80 players participating.

The annals of Angrelmar are compiled by the good monks of the Temple of Mantor on Eerie in the Book of Jammak. Here is their entry for the year 875: Again the churchmen met on the Isle of Ara to solemnize the union of the four churches into the Imperial Church. Hildric of Dragona became primate of Angrelmar and head of the Council. He appointed Divor of Hatra to be Cardinal Bishop of the Imperial Church in Angrelmar. Many secular lords attended this council, including the regent, Rathal and Prince Vicor. Vicor used this occasion to denounce his cousin, Auerlus, for oathbreaking which Vicor believed cleared his own name at the same time. The council also accepted Lady Callizar's realm into the Empire as the Principality of Shalamar. That fall, at the Feast of Alfons, the lords of the South offered a crown to their Lady Callizar. It was rumored that Duke Auerlus had become unbalanced by the denunciation of Vicor. Although he did not execute his wife for her infidelity, he did force her to watch the beheading of Duchess Mimma who died for committing crimes against her husband, the late Duke Barthel. After Auerlus' bold recapture of the Smoke Isles he rode directly to Emarca and put the body of the deceased Warden on trial for various petty crimes. When he found the cadaver guilty, it was tossed

into the river. There was only the usual border warfare on the Kalatian frontier. It was rumored that the Kalatians were having internal difficulties. Duke Ardon had driven his kinsman, Val, from his lands. Val took refuge at the court of Artak. Ardon refused to aid Artak until the exiled Val was turned over to him. It was heard that Lord Morbet Mataran still remained uncrowned. To add to the problems of the Exiles, the neighboring realm of Varata began to attack their borders, claiming the throne of the Greys for the Varatan Queen, Belmella. From the Manatarian lands it was heard that Feargus of Tamra was captured by his enemy, Hasket of Kirmon.

Clemens & Associates

Terra II

With the long winter in the north coming to a close, many tribes have barely been able to survive. Some were caught in the frigid mountain passes with continuing snow storms making movement almost impossible. They saw their herds dwindle to the point where starvation was a distinct possibility.

The Mailed Fist alliance has issued a proclamation that the area west of Diwal between the mountains and the sea belongs to them. If their threat is carried out, it will mean much of the lucrative trade between Diwal and Ecaio will cease.

Heavy trading of silver in Vinchu has resulted in the price of silver being reduced. This will probably mean that more silver will be shipped to Diwal and Nayin.

The first attack upon a tribal village has occurred. Unfortunately, the village was inadequately protected. The warriors of the Wolframite tribe quickly overran the defenses and killed most of the villagers. The remainder were made slaves, and all the weapons and supplies taken.

Many tribes have chosen the path of aggression to achieve their aims. Some of those on the attack are the Ultara, Deiran, Les Trois Francais, and the infamous Raging Violet. Several tribes have found that it is not enough to just attack. To be rewarding enough to pay for the loss of life great care should be made in the formulation of attack orders.

In the southern hemisphere, the Southern Tribal Confederacy continues to grow. It is the largest alliance in the south and is gathering information rapidly. Most of the tribes in the south are hung up in the mountains that run between Halda and Wirka. Several tribes have wandered far away from the well-traveled routes and rarely see tracks of other tribes.

Graaf Simulations

Company News: We are pleased to report that participation in *Feudal Lords* is growing nicely with over 35 games in progress. We are currently starting a new game approximately every two weeks. We also offer private games of *Feudal Lords* for groups of 10 or more players who want to play together, and "friends games" for players who want to play in a game with one or two friends.

Several more games have ended since our last Update report. The game winners have been: Game 2 by Sue Kerr on turn 15, Game 3 by Peter Sleight on turn 25, Game 5 by Jon Vavrus on turn 16, Game 6 by Michael Gray on turn 20, and Game 12 by Ray Ulman on turn 15.

Feudal Lords received a very nice review in the first issue of *PBM Universal* magazine, which also had an article with some useful playing hints and strategies for new players.

—John Van De Graaf

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ACADEMY OF ADVENTURE GAMING ARTS & DESIGN
OFFICIAL ORIGINS AWARDS NOMINATION BALLOT

*for the year 1983, to be presented at The National Adventure Gaming Convention ORIGINS '84,
July 5 - 8, 1984 in Dallas Texas.*

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The Origins Awards, presented at Origins each year, are an international, popular series of awards aimed at recognizing outstanding achievements in Adventure Gaming. They comprise the Charles Roberts Awards for Boardgaming, and the H.G. Wells Awards for Miniatures and Role-Playing Games. An international Awards Committee of 25 hobbyists (some professionals, but primarily independents) directs and administers the awards system. The nomination ballot is open to all interested gamers. YOUR VOTE can make a real difference! A final ballot is prepared by the committee and voted on by members of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design. Academy membership, \$2/year, is open to active, accomplished hobbyists, both pro and amateur. Membership guidelines are available for a SASE from the addresses given below. Correspondence should be sent to the USA address. Present members may renew by sending their check with this ballot. Canadians may send \$2 Canadian, payable to Mike Girard. UK and European members may send 1 pound sterling payable to Ian Livingstone. US and all others may send US \$2 payable to Bill Somers. Appropriate addresses are listed below. Do not send money unless you are already an Academy member.

The Academy and the Awards Committee as well as the Origins convention itself, function under the overall direction of GAMA, the Game Manufacturers Association. Direct correspondence to Paul R. Banner, P.O. Box 1646 Bloomington, IL 61701.

**THE H.G. WELLS AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING
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1. Best Historical Figure Series, 1983: _____

2. Best Fantasy/SF Series, 1983: _____

3. Best Vehicular Series, 1983: _____
(includes any man-made conveyance,
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ships, aircraft, spacecraft, etc.)
4. Best Miniatures Rules, 1983: _____

5. Best Role-Playing Rules, 1983: _____

6. Best Role-Playing Adventure, 1983: _____

7. Best Professional Miniatures
Magazine, 1983: _____

8. Best Professional Role-playing
Magazine, 1983: _____

Instructions. Read Carefully: Print legibly or type your nominations. Ballots that are messy, not filled out correctly, or show attempts at stuffing will not be counted. You may list three nominees per category. It does not matter in what order you list them. To keep the voting as meaningful as possible, do not make selections in unfamiliar categories. **YOU MUST SIGN THE BALLOT!** And include your address. You may vote only once.

Nominations should be for products produced during the calendar year 1983. Exceptions are permitted for older products which gain significant exposure and acclaim during 1983. Miniature figure series nominations should be for product lines which are either new or have been substantially expanded in 1983.

This ballot may be reproduced and circulated by any means available, provided its contents are faithfully copied. Magazine editors and publishers should plan to include the ballot in an issue of their publications due to come out during the interval from December 1983 thru March 1984. Clubs and other organizations should circulate copies among their members shortly after the first of the year.

All adventure gamers are urged to vote.

Deadline: March 31, 1984

**THE CHARLES ROBERTS AWARDS FOR
OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN
BOARDGAMING**

9. Best Pre-20th Century Boardgame, 1983: _____

10. Best 20th Century Boardgame, 1983: _____

11. Best Science Fiction Boardgame, 1983: _____

12. Best Fantasy Boardgame, 1983: _____

13. Best Professional Boardgaming
Magazine, 1983: _____

14. Best Adventure Game for Home
Computer, 1983: _____

15. Best Amateur Adventure Gaming
Magazine, 1983: _____

16. Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame:
(Previous winners of the Hall of Fame are
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Send in your ballot by March 31, 1983 to only one of the following addresses:

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UK and Europe:
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27-29 Sunbeam
London NW10
United Kingdom

USA and all others:
Awards % Bill Somers
PO Box 656
Wyandotte, MI 48192

Australia & New Zealand:
Awards % Adrian Pett
Breakout Magazine
P.O. Box 162
Moorool Bark, Victoria
Australia 3138

BUG-EYED MONSTERS

They Want Our Women!

On silent grav sleds, the alien creatures slide through the forest, readying their lasers and stunners, drooling slightly in anticipation. They choose their first target: a little clapboard house nestled in the woods above town. They attack. The sounds of lasers and stunners are soon met by cries of fear and rage. Wild with lust, they fail to notice when one human makes it to a car and careens away to rouse the citizenry of the small town against the alien threat.

Ugly, slobbering, bug-eyed monsters! They land in remote American towns and make off with women. BUG-EYED MONSTERS is the new West End release by Greg Costikyan, designer of the successful *Creature That Ate Sheboygan*.™ In this game, Greg returns to the "Creature" genre, bringing a flying saucer with menacing monsters to the quiet remote American town of Freedom, New Hampshire.

One player, as the monster, must attempt to kidnap the earthling women (the most beautiful in the universe). The other player must rally the citizens of the town to

stop the repulsive invaders and save his womenfolk from a fate worse than death.

A special "Aliens Kidnap Presidential Hopeful" scenario is also provided. Dwight Eisenhower, campaigning for the New Hampshire primary, along with an entourage of state troopers and secret service men, is surprised by a party of bug-eyed monsters. Will they kidnap America's war hero?

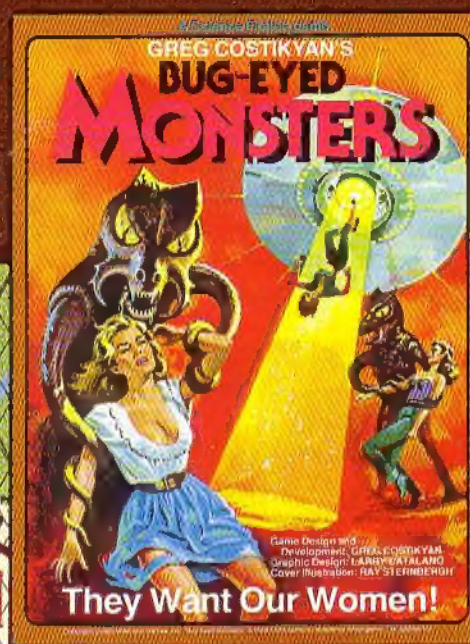
A simple but elegant game system with clear brief rules makes BUG-EYED MONSTERS a good introduction to adventure gaming, but its subject and smooth play will appeal to the hardcore gamer as well.

THE DESIGNER

Greg Costikyan is the designer of nine published games, including THE CREATURE THAT ATE SHEBOYGAN,™ SWORDS AND SORCERY,™ DEATH MAZE,™ RETURN OF THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT,™ and TRAIL BLAZER.™

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- one 22" x 17" game map
- 160 full-color, back-printed precision die cut 5/8" counters.
- one 8-page rules booklet
- two dice and full-color game box (1" wide bookshelf size box)



Complexity: Low
Solitaire Suitability: Low
Players: Two
Game Scale: Individual Person
Playing Time: An hour or less for experienced gamers

